Classroom Management in the Elementary Classroom

An Honors Thesis (Honrs 499)

By

Laura A. Jacobs

Thesis Advisor
Dr. Elizabeth Jared
Department of Elementary Education

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana
July 1999

Expected date of graduation
December 1999
Abstract

The purpose of this thesis project is to investigate the different philosophies of classroom management. Classroom management is one foundation in the academic setting; it helps set the tone of the classroom. As a future elementary teacher, it is crucial that I understand the role of effectively managing a successful classroom. This thesis highlights classroom management in three main areas: planning, motivation, and discipline. It also supplies research from experts in the field of education.

The research paper includes appendices designed for use in my own classroom. The project contains classroom policies and rules, letters to parents, a student of the week plan, a token economy system, and other items. Some of the documents in appendices appear twice because the provide examples of more than one topic. All components of the project are created for implementation in my future classroom.
Acknowledgments

Thank you to Dr. Elizabeth Jared, my thesis advisor, for her willingness to assist me in the thesis processes. Special thanks to my mother, Debra Jacobs, for being a role model of an excellent educator, for providing feedback when I needed it, and for spending hours discussing the fundamentals of classroom management with me. Thank you to Christina Day, a true friend, for being the most supportive proofreader and editor I know. Thank you to Michael Jacobs, my father, for allowing me to spend hours creating this document on his computer.
Overview of Educational Philosophy and Theoretical Foundation

The education of children is the most crucial function of society. A teacher is the facilitator of knowledge. Therefore, classroom management is a teacher’s top priority. To ensure classroom management, the teacher should provide an integration of well-planned curricular opportunities that expand the intellect of students. This is a result of meticulous planning. A teacher should also work toward increasing the motivation of students, as well as, maintaining a disciplined setting.

A teacher must be aware of the facility and support personnel in school. Charles and Senter (1983) suggest the educator must know the layout of the building, colleagues, administrators, and available resources. Teachers also must know the location of the library, gymnasium, nearest restrooms, main office, nurse’s station, playground, and all other areas where students might go. The teacher can decide how to get to a location and how students will behave there. For example, the teacher can plan a route to take students to the library, where students can quietly find a book and start reading. The teacher can collaborate with the librarian to help students find books that coincide with what they are studying. Knowing the building and staff helps a teacher use the resources a school provides to improve the academics of the classroom.

After becoming familiar with the building and staff, the teacher needs to plan how to use space in the classroom. A teacher must decide how to arrange classroom furniture so it promotes learning. Desks need to be mobile so they can be arranged to benefit the teacher’s lessons. Evertson, Emmer, Clements, and Worsham (1984) think when students are expected to unite ideas their desks need to be arranged together. A teacher
will want to utilize cabinet and shelf space. Educational materials and supplies also need to be organized. When supplies are not organized valuable learning time is wasted in distributing materials to students. Walls and bulletin boards can be used to display educational materials, reminders, and quality student work. Once the teacher knows how to use the space in the classroom effectively learning can begin.

An educator must begin to tackle the academic path by planning the curriculum at the assigned grade level. A yearlong plan is the foundation for the school year and contains long term goals. From this plan, the teacher can develop unit plans that focus on a topic or theme. Next, a teacher needs to plan engaging daily lessons. The focus of an educator’s school day should be to develop precise lessons that provide stimulation for students in educational activities. Kounin (1970) believes engaging students in the learning process allows teachers to prevent problems rather than control misbehavior. Stimulating curriculum keeps students on the academic path.

To be effective with students, a teacher must realize students learn in different ways. Students may prefer learning through their eyes, ears, or body movement. Drydon and Vos (1994) believe some students learn through visual forms, some learn through auditory listening, while others learn through tactile-kinesthetic movements. “No learning style is better or worse-than any other style” (Drydon & Vos, 1994, p. 338). With learning styles in mind, a superb teacher seeks information pertaining to the personal learning style of the students. This awareness allows a teacher to adapt a teaching style for the personal benefit of students in the classroom.

Children learn best through various instructional methods. Kornhaber and Gardner (1993) support the idea that students should be engaged in a variety of activities
to increase learning. Basically, the teacher must incorporate a variety of teaching methods including projects, reports, discussions, and cooperative learning activities that address the different modes of learning. One of the finest ways for students to learn is by working with each other to reach a common goal. Slavin (1990) defines cooperative learning as an alternative to direct instruction where the teacher delivers information and the students sit and listen. Slavin (1991) states cooperative learning improves achievement, builds group relationships, helps with mainstreaming, and increases self-esteem.

An effective classroom motivates students to learn and improve their skills. Children benefit from a teacher who leads them with enthusiasm and commitment to lifelong learning. Nodding (1986) believes teachers should model caring through meticulous preparation and lively presentations of material. A strong knowledge of motivational strategies is necessary to promote students to improve their weaknesses. Coil (1992) believes “motivation involves a sense of purpose, a feeling of enthusiasm, and an ability for self-direction” (p. 55). A classroom teacher needs to know what motivates students to work at their highest potential. Therefore, a teacher must teach children how to set individual goals.

A contentious educator knows that human beings are driven by rewards. Brophy and Evertson (1976) reveal that students learn more in classrooms that recognize hard work. A teacher should include symbolic rewards (grades) and material rewards (objects) in the classroom. For example, a teacher may have a student of the week program. This program supports students who are well rounded academically and display responsible behavior. A token economy system allows students to earn incentives like money.
Epanchin, Townsend, and Stoddard (1994) declare that this reward system promotes acceptable behavior. Teachers can use this system to boost the egos and achievement levels of students by allowing them to purchase pencils, books, toys, games, or treats with their earned tokens. Finally, an educator can have the class work toward a group reward, such as a field trip, extra recess, or another fun activity.

An educator must communicate with students to broaden learning. Giving students feedback tells students exactly how they are doing. Praise identifies and encourages successful behavior to repeat. An educator can deliver positive feedback through pleasant body language (a smile, nod, high five, etc.) or positive verbal statements (great job, fantastic, nice work, etc.). Charles and Senter (1983) insist positive feedback makes students persistent when work is difficult. However, a teacher can also tell students how they can improve. Constructive feedback can have a positive outcome if given with care. A teacher should first tell students what they are doing well and then provide suggestions for improvement.

Outside the classroom, a teacher is responsible for giving feedback to parents. Regular communication maintains a collaborative relationship with parents. Mendler (1992) suggests a teacher must focus on building a supportive team with guardians so the school and home are working to expand the abilities of students. This relationship is vital to the education of children and should be maintained through written updates, telephone calls, and conferences. An educator must relay observations of positive and negative behavior to parents.

The teacher needs to demonstrate the ability to maintain a non-disruptive environment. A strong knowledge of management strategies is required to treat all
students with respect and dignity. Curwin and Mendler (1988) suggest classrooms need to have clear rules that set behavioral expectations. A teacher must include rules that follow school policies. However, the teacher should maintain a democratic classroom by including students' ideas and opinions when defining classroom rules and policies. Curwin and Mendler (1988) also claim students are more apt to follow rules they have helped create.

A noteworthy teacher understands that students make mistakes and provides opportunities to learn from them. Students need to be aware of possible consequences for misbehavior before it occurs. When a disruption occurs, a teacher must be prepared to resolve the problem. Canter and Canter (1992) suggest that an educator needs to follow a plan for extinguishing misbehavior. There should be a progressive plan for the first, second, third, and fourth offense. Curwin and Mendler (1988) insist students should be dealt with on an individual basis. Disruptive students should not be ridiculed for their behavior but guided toward acceptable actions.

A teacher should try and resolve minor behavior problems without assistance from administration. Canter and Canter (1992) insist an administrator should only be utilized as a last resort or when misbehavior is extreme. For example, if a fight occurs or a major school rule is violated, students should be sent to the principal's office. Otherwise, the teacher should handle all other problems, because it reinforces to the students that a teacher is the manager of the classroom.

If punishment is necessary in the classroom, it should be completed with discretion and privacy. Long (1985) claims a teacher should use a mild form of punishment, such as time out in the classroom. Glasser (1990) asserts that "time out" is
an excellent way for students to recollect themselves and join the class when they are under control (p. 182). When time out is not an option, a teacher can use a response cost. Under the token economy system, students would receive a fine for out of control behavior. The students would lose a reasonable amount of tokens they have earned.

Teaching is a profession that demands tremendous planning, motivation, and discipline. Without these components a classroom will not run smoothly. Children deserve to attend class in a controlled environment that focuses on scholastic behavior. However, the classroom is still centered on working together and concentrates on students' needs.
Students entered a classroom and sat at desks marked with nameplates. As they looked around, they noticed the classroom was bright and inviting; it was set up for successful learning. The teacher was friendly, well prepared, and enthusiastic about being a part of a profession that facilitates learning in young minds. The teacher explained procedures, provided rewards, and kept students actively engaged in the curriculum. Students excelled and made learning gains, as they were comfortable in an environment that met their individual needs.

The teacher in this scenario had an exceptional understanding of classroom management. A teacher must be able to manage students from the time they enter the classroom until the time they are dismissed from school. “In most schools, students are told for six hours everyday where to go, what time to be there, how long to take for biological necessities, which learning is relevant, what to learn, and how their learning will be evaluated” (Curwin & Mendler, 1988, p. 8). The book, Learning from Teaching: A Developmental Perspective, states “…by ‘classroom management,’ we mean planning and conducting activities in an orderly fashion; keeping students actively engaged in lessons and seatwork activities; and minimizing disruptions and discipline problems” (Brophy & Evertson, 1976, p. 51). Classroom management is extremely important, because “…ineffective management might directly impede learning by causing student behavior that is incompatible with attention or comprehension” (Duke, 1982, p. 3). Classrooms are managed by being guided through meticulous planning, motivating academic behavior, and providing discipline measures effectively.
Orientation to the School Building

Getting to Know the Physical Layout

Becoming oriented to the school building develops an effectual classroom management system. "The quality of education is largely determined by what happens at the school site" (Wong & Wong, 1991, p. 266). A teacher should know the physical layout of the school building so students can get to activities on time. The teacher must "know the locations of library, playgrounds, restrooms, cafeteria, nurse’s office, custodians’ station, teacher workroom and lounge" (Charles & Senter, 1983, p. 10). A teacher must be aware of where a location is and the best route to get students there. The workroom is a place for a teacher to find, duplicate, or create teaching materials for a lesson.

It is important for a teacher to develop a systematic procedure for coming and going to each location in the school. For example, a teacher needs to address the correct behavior for the lunchroom by giving directions. "Directions are instructions given to students about procedures" (Charles & Senter, 1983, p. 6). To illustrate this idea, a teacher can plan a procedure for lunchroom behavior. First, students need to get their food, sit down at a table, and eat quietly. Second, students need to wait to be excused by a teacher. Next, students should push in their chairs, dispose of trash, and return their lunch trays. Finally, students need to form a line and wait for the teacher’s instructions.

Building a Relationship with Staff Members

Once a teacher knows the physical layout of the school building, the teacher must get to know all staff members. A teacher needs to “become acquainted with as many personnel as possible-administration, clerical, custodial staff, and other teachers”
It is crucial a teacher knows the staff because it helps forge a strong team. The working environment benefits children when teachers share ideas and problem solve together. Teaching is a complex profession. “Sharing the load is one thing you [a teacher] must do if you [a teacher] hope to earn the respect of your [his/her] colleagues” (Charles & Senter, 1983, p. 58). There are many activities that require a teacher to work together with staff. For example, “there are committees… team meetings, open houses… school musicals, carnivals, … curriculum groups, material evaluations, and in-service sessions” (Charles & Senter, 1983, p. 58). A strong rapport with staff members increases educational gains.

Preparing the Classroom Environment

One of the most time consuming aspects of developing an efficient classroom management system is preparing the classroom environment. The teacher needs to envision students’ responses to each aspect of the physical environment. Then a teacher needs to develop a means to prevent potential mishaps or dangers. This task requires a teacher to think about desk arrangements, storage options, material distribution, work areas, and bulletin boards.

Furniture Arrangement

Teachers have several options when it comes to desk arrangements in the classroom. Desks may be arranged in groups or rows. The organization of the desks communicates a teacher's philosophy. For example, “desks in rows indicate that the focus of the classroom is the teacher, the chalk board, or some other central point”
Current educational trends are moving away from positioning desks in rows.

The furniture arrangement in rows forces a one-to-all relationship and communicates coldness and distance that can make the students feel as if they are nothing more than numbers who will be herded into their stall-like seats, force-fed a diet of academic content, and herded to the next feeding corral when the bell rings (Wolfgang, 1996, p. 215).

Whereas, “desks arranged in groups imply that interaction and collaboration among students are expected at least for some activities” (Evertson, Emmer, Clements, & Worsham, 1984, pp. 3-4). It is up to the teacher to arrange the students’ desks according to what will provide the best delivery of instruction.

Once the arrangement style has been planned, the educator must decide on the placement of the desks. A teacher considers the positioning of the desks in the classroom, “because a poor arrangement may interfere with visibility of chalkboards or other instructional areas, increase distractions during instruction, or make it difficult for ... students to move around the room” (Evertson, Emmer, Clements, & Worsham, 1984, p. 3). Students must be able to see the teacher, and the teacher needs to be close to the students.

The arrangement of furniture and equipment within the classroom space establishes a structure that will control proximity or physical closeness of teacher to student and students, and, if improperly designed, can actually prevent the teacher from seeing the students who need her visual and personal investment (Wolfgang, 1996, p. 214).
Students and the teacher must also be able to move comfortably around the classroom. There needs to be enough space between groups or rows of desks for students and the teacher to travel around the room with ease. A teacher plans to circulate in the classroom, because “there is no better preventive for student unrest than a teacher... circulating among the students...” (Glasser, 1990, p. 280). Circulating can allow students quick access to assistance when they have a question. However, students also need to move conveniently to complete tasks. For example, students need space to get to the door, pencil sharpener, and turn in papers. If desks are too close together, students have more opportunity to bump into each other and possibly get injured.

Besides deciding how to organize the students’ desks, the teacher must also consider where to position the teacher’s desk. The teacher’s desk should not be in the way, but it still must be accessible. Wolfgang (1996) states, “the teacher’s desk is never placed in the front of the room because you want the students and their desks to be as close as possible to the front chalkboard and to the teacher” (p. 215). The best location for the teacher’s desk is in one of the four corners of the classroom. It is suggested that “the desk is located near the door and off to the side...” (Wolfgang, 1996, p. 215). Near the door is the optimal location for the teacher’s area, because it allows messages to be delivered and visitors to talk with the teacher without crossing the learning environment.

**Organize Materials**

Once the furniture is in place, the teacher must then organize materials. A teacher needs to decide where to store equipment in the classroom. With the growing hands-on approaches to teaching school subjects, there are often several materials and manipulatives that need to be stored in the classroom. Often a teacher separates materials
in boxes, plastic containers, or other types of storing devices. Materials students are to use daily need to be clearly labeled and stored at a level all children can reach. Materials the students need permission to use need to be kept in a cabinet or on a higher level so students cannot reach them without assistance.

When the teacher has organized the educational materials, a procedure needs to be developed for distributing and collecting materials.

Materials are often distributed by the following procedures: (1) Teacher or aide distributes during recess, noon, and before school, so that materials are waiting for students when they arrive. (2) Monitors are trained to distribute materials as needed at recess, noon, or during class activities. (3) Students themselves get the materials as instructed (Charles & Senter, 1983, p. 115).

If the teacher’s main goal is for students to become independent, then the students must be responsible for getting their own materials. It is essential for the educator to discuss and demonstrate how to use each piece of equipment correctly. It is also appropriate for teachers to restrict material use when they are not being handled with care.

Students learn organization skills by taking care of their own materials. Each student needs to have textbooks, workbooks, paper, pencils, and other school supplies. These materials are stored in their desks or on a shelf. Students are responsible for keeping these materials orderly. However, “teachers use various techniques for encouraging students to keep their desks orderly, ranging from simple inspection to procedures intended to be interacting and motivating” (Charles & Senter, 1983, p. 15). It is often necessary for a teacher to provide students with time to reorganize and clean their
materials. The best time of the day for students to put their supplies into order is at the last few minutes of the school day (Charles & Senter, 1983, p. 15). A teacher’s desk may also be organized at the end of the day to model this behavior.

**Classroom Displays**

The final step in planning for the classroom environment is the wall space and bulletin boards. Wall space and bulletin boards are potential areas to exhibit students work. “One of the most effective and inexpensive ways to decorate a classroom is with students work” (Simola, 1996, p.90). Students like to see their completed projects on display because it gives them a sense of accomplishment. Evertson (1984) stated, “Wall space and bulletin boards provide areas to display student work, instructionally relevant material, decorative items, assignments, rules, schedules, a clock, and other items of interest” (p. 4). An educator can tap into the interest of students by appealing to their visual senses when colorful bulletin boards are created. The most cognitively stimulating bulletin boards allow children to interact with them in some fashion. A closing activity for a unit of study might be a bulletin board created by the students. A classroom with numerous displays appeals to the eye and also shows classroom visitors what the focus of academic is or has been.

**Planning the Academic Foundation**

**Yearlong Planning**

The succeeding stage in planning for classroom management requires a teacher to develop a plan for the year’s academics. In this step, the teacher must “…familiarize with the curriculum for their grade level, together with textbooks and other materials”
A teacher must review national, state, and district curriculum guides for each subject area. Curriculum guides show an educator the goals for the assigned grade level. These goals help students make academic advances. Once the teacher has spent time reviewing materials, a yearlong plan must be devised. This plan allows a teacher to “lay out a tentative calendar for the year” (Charles & Senter, 1983, p. 10). The yearlong “planning contributes to efficiency through laying out, in advance, what is to be done each day, each week, each month, and thus the entire year” (Charles & Senter, 1983, p. 6). A yearlong plan is the foundation for the school year and contains long term goals the teacher found in curriculum guides.

Unit Plans

A unit plan focuses on one topic or theme. Units incorporate all subject areas taught by the teacher. Traditional classroom schedules provide a set time for math, reading, science, language arts, social studies, and various other subjects. However, thematic units allow material to be blended into instruction. “Material does not have to be crammed into artificial time periods, but can be extended across the curriculum and across the day” (Meinbach, Rothlein, & Fredericks, 1995, p. 3). Thematic units show students how a theme relates to real life. “A thematic, integrated approach to teaching helps learners find persistent patterns in life” (Cummings, 1996, p. 147). Patterns found in a unit plan make it easier for students to connect ideas or concepts, because they give students several views of the same topic.

A thematic unit requires planning. To develop a thematic unit, a teacher must first decide on a topic. The theme should come from the yearlong plan the teacher created. According to Meinbach, Rothlein, and Fredericks (1995),
There are five primary areas to consider in designing an effective and successful thematic unit. These include: A. Selecting the theme, B. Organizing the theme, C. Gathering materials and resources, D. Designing activities and projects, E. Implementing the unit (p. 9).

Once all of the planning has occurred to create a unit, it can be implemented in the classroom. There are several options for how long a unit can be taught. A unit can be the focus of the classroom for as long as a month. However, a unit can be taught part of a day, a whole day, several days, or a week (Meinbach, Rothlein, & Fredericks, 1995, pp. 23-24). It is up to the teacher to decide how long to cover a topic. If students are interested and remain interested in a unit, then that should determine how long to investigate a theme.

**Lesson Planning**

Lesson plans need to be developed to be an organized teacher. Lessons build the sustenance of the curriculum because they are the focus of each school day. Lesson plans allow a teacher to prepare content in a way that promotes the attainment of knowledge. Thorough planning helps a teacher prevent problems. According to Kellough and Roberts (1998),

Two points must be made: (1) lesson planning is an ongoing process, even for competent veteran teachers; (2) teachers must take time to plan, reflect, write, test, evaluate, and rewrite their plans to reach optimal performance (p. 250).

There are many formats for a written lesson plan. When a lesson is planned on paper, it "should provide a tentative outline of the class or time period . . . but should
always remain flexible” (Kellough & Roberts, 1998, p.252). Madeline Hunter developed one preferred format for lesson planning. It is commonly referred to as the “Hunter Model.” This design contains seven components:

1. **Anticipatory set.** Anticipatory set is the result of an activity, which occurs during the time that students are physically arriving or mentally “shifting gears from the activity just finished. It elicits attending behavior and a mental readiness or “set” for the content.

2. **Objective and purpose.** This step involves teacher communication which informs the students about what they will know and be able to do by the end of instruction and why that accomplishment is important, useful, and relevant.

3. **Instructional input.** Students must acquire new information about the knowledge, process, or skill they are to achieve. Regardless of whether that information comes from discovery, discussion, reading, listening, observing, or being told, the teacher must analyze the final objective to identify the knowledge and skills that need to be acquired. Only then can the input phase of the lesson be designed so that a successful outcome becomes predictable.

4. **Modeling.** “ Seeing” what is meant is an important adjunct to learning. Usually, it is facilitating for the learners to perceive the process or product they are expected to acquire or produce. So that creativity will not be stifled, or generalizability impeded, several examples should be a routine part of most lessons. Demonstrations live or filmed, of
processes and products are facilitating rather than restricting to student initiative and creativity.

5. *Checking for understanding.* The teacher needs to check for students’ possession of essential information and also needs to observe students’ performance to make sure they exhibit the skills necessary to achieve the instructional objective. Students are given oral and/or written examples of the task and monitored to see if they understand.

6. *Guided practice.* Students practice their new knowledge or skill under direct teacher supervision. New learning is like wet cement; it is easily damaged. An error at the beginning of learning can easily “set” so that it is harder to eradicate than had it been corrected immediately.

7. *Independent practice.* Students must be provided with an opportunity to practice without the availability of the teacher (Nighswander, 1988, p. 174).

A successful lesson for any subject matter contains each of the above components. For an example of a lesson plan that follows the “Hunter Model” see Appendix A.

**Incorporating Learning Styles**

An effective classroom must meet the learning styles of all students. There are many ways students can learn academic material. A teacher must be aware of the styles children use to learn. Human beings are influenced by their senses. Research suggests that “…when humans learn they remember approximately 10 percent of what they read, 20 percent of what they hear, 30 percent of what they see, 70 percent of what they do” (Charles & Senter, 1983, p. 31). Most children detect wisdom by using visual (eyes),
auditory (ears), or kinesthetic-tactile (body) learning styles. Children use each of the three forms to learn but prefer one style to the others. Diagnostic Studies, of Rockville, Maryland, showed that “the learning style of a typical student is 37% tactile-kinesthetic, 34% auditory, and 29% visual” (Dryden & Vos, 1994, p. 124). An educator must observe students to discover which style they use to obtain knowledge. This information permits a teacher to accommodate each style in the classroom.

**Visual Learners**

Visual learners are people who use their eyes as the main tool for gathering knowledge. They “…learn best when they can see pictures of what they are studying, with a smaller percentage who are ‘print-oriented’ and can learn by reading” (Dryden & Vos, 1994, p. 125). “Some students are very visual: they have to see everything” (Dryden & Vos, 1994, p. 126). A teacher can create visual aids, such as posters, interactive bulletin boards, and diagrams to go with lessons. “When presenting material, [a teacher should] use visual displays, such as writing on the overhead projector, to assist students who are visual learners” (Jones & Jones, 1990, p. 218). A teacher might notice a visual learner by their inability to follow verbal instructions. “Unless directions or assignments are in writing, [visual learners] may have difficulty remembering them” (Boyles & Contadino, 1997, p. 36). An educator must remember to give students directions in writing or exhibit directions on the chalkboard for visual learners. A teacher might also want to use videos to give students a picture of content they are supposed to learn. A teacher must provide a pathways for visual learners to excel.
**Auditory Learners**

Auditory learners use their ears as the main instrument for collecting knowledge. They need “sound to maximize retention” (Mandel & Marcus, 1995, p. 268). Auditory learners make a smooth transition into the school setting. “When they start school auditory learners adapt most easily to the classroom because listening and talking come naturally to them” (Johnson, 1997, p. 137). The auditory learners can retain information the teacher delivers through lectures. They “…learn best through sound: through music and talk” (Dryden & Vos, 1994, p. 125). A teacher can use music to help students remember information. For example, a teacher can create or find a song to memorize multiplication facts. Students can also create raps or rhymes to learn new material. Auditory learners need time to talk and listen to their peers throughout the learning process. A teacher must pursue ways to expand the opportunities for auditory learners in the classroom.

**Kinesthetic-Tactile Learners**

Kinesthetic-tactile learners are people who learn by using their body and hands as a way of gathering information. They “…learn best when they are involved, moving, experiencing and experimenting…” (Dryden & Vos, 1994, p. 125). A teacher can recognize these students by their struggle to fit into a traditional setting. “Kinesthetic learners have the hardest time handling school lessons that are primarily based on following verbal instructions” (Johnson, 1997, p. 138). To help kinesthetic learners, a teacher can provide opportunities for experiments, games, manipulatives, computer software, and projects. “There are always hands-on activities or activities that combine two or three different subjects, such as combining reading and writing activities with
drawing or singing or craft activities and projects” (Johnson, 1997, p. 138). A teacher must search for ways to meet the needs of kinesthetic learners.

Using a Multitude of Instructional Methods

To keep the educational environment interesting, a teacher needs to include a variety of instructional methods. Kornhaber and Gardner (1993) believe a variety of activities in the classroom lead to increased learning. Some instructional methods are centered on the teacher being the focus of the lesson. Lecture and teacher lead discussions are examples of teacher-focused instruction. Other methods a teacher can use require students to work together. For example, a teacher can develop cooperative learning activities. However, a teacher can also blend lessons to account for independent work. To illustrate independence, a student can work alone on a project or in a testing situation. A teacher needs to be eclectic and use a variety of instructional methods. No matter what method is chosen, a teacher needs to remember the main focus of the classroom is learning, so the method used must provide the most opportunity for attainment of knowledge.

Lecture

Lecture is a teacher-directed instructional strategy. “A lecture is an extended presentation in which the speaker presents factual information in an organized and logically sequenced way” (Johnson & Johnson, 1994, p. 123). A teacher does all of the talking in a lecture. “It typically results in long periods of uninterrupted teacher-centered, expository discourse that regulates students to the role of passive ‘spectators’ in the
classroom" (Johnson & Johnson, 1994, pp. 123-124). Lecturing should be used sparingly, because it encourages students to take an inactive role in the learning process.

A lecture should only be used when a teacher is presenting information that would take too long for students to discover on their own. "Lecturing is appropriate when faculty wish to communicate a large amount of material to many students in a short period of time..." (Johnson & Johnson, 1994, p. 124). A lecture can be used to create interest in a new topic being studied. "When a lecture is presented by a highly authoritative person or in a skillful way with lots of humor and examples, students may be intrigued and want to find out more about the subject" (Johnson & Johnson, 1994, p. 124). A lecture should be carefully planned and not over used so students are captivated and active in academics.

**Discussion**

Discussion is another teacher-directed instructional tool. "Whole-class discussion is a teaching technique used frequently by all teachers" (Kellough & Roberts, 1998, p. 318). Discussion in the classroom must be organized so students learn to listen to each other speak. "During whole-class instruction, insist that students raise their hands and be called on before they are allowed to speak" (Kellough & Roberts, 1998, p. 325). An educator must incorporate all students input and opinions into a class discussion. "It is easy for a teacher to fall into the trap of interacting with only the brightest students, or only those in the front of the room..." (Kellough & Roberts, 1998, p. 325). When students are not contributing to the discussion, the teacher has the power to bring those students into the discussion by asking them a question. Discussions can be used with any topic in the curriculum. For example, a teacher can use discussion to talk about the
characters in literature the students are reading. Students can talk about the events in the story that reveal a character’s personality in the book.

**Cooperative Learning Activities**

Learning to work cooperatively with others is an important skill an educator can teach students how to do. “The ability to work with others is almost a prerequisite to success in this world” (Cummings, 1996, p. 101). When people can work together it creates a better classroom environment. Opportunity to work in small groups increases group cohesiveness and mutual concern among classmates (Slavin, 1991). Therefore, a teacher must create opportunities to work on this skill. In order to make cooperative learning groups effective, a teacher must decide how groups will be selected, how long a group will work together, what students’ roles will be, and what elements of cooperative learning need to be taught.

A cooperative learning group can be selected in many ways. One way a cooperative learning group can be selected is by the students’ choice. “The result of this may be groups of all high or low achievers or groups formed because of ethnic group or color” (Cummings, 1996, p. 104). Having students’ choose their own groups does not create groups that are balanced. Slavin (1990) believes groups need to be balanced by ability, race, and sex. Therefore, teacher selected groups work the best for cooperative learning activities. “Teachers can usually put together optimal combinations of students” (Johnson & Johnson, 1994, p. 104). A teacher should create groups of approximately four students. “A team of four might consist of one high, two average, and one low achiever” (Cummings, 1996, p. 106). The classroom teacher has more insight into who would work best with each other or who would benefit from working together.
Once groups are formed it is up to the teacher to decide how long the group will operate together. "Some teachers keep cooperative learning groups together for an entire semester or year" (Johnson & Johnson, 1994, p. 105). This type of teacher wants students to build a strong relationship by completing an abundance of activities together. As students continue to work together, over time they have to learn how to face differences. "Other teachers like to keep a learning group together only long enough to complete a task, unit, or chapter" (Johnson & Johnson, 1994, p. 105). This kind of teacher wants students to have the opportunity to work with more students. By working with more students in a year, students learn to relate to a variety of personalities. Both time frames teach students positive lessons.

Students working in a cooperative group must have their own role. "When using cooperative learning groups, it is advisable to assign roles to each member of the group" (Kellough & Roberts, 1998, p. 243). Roles organize what group members are to accomplish for the group. "Roles prescribe what group members can expect from each other and, therefore, what each member is obligated to do" (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994, p. 34). For an example of how roles can be used in a cooperative lesson, see Appendix A. A student does not have to remain under the same role for the entire existence of a group. "These roles should be rotated, either during the activity or from one time to the next" (Kellough & Roberts, 1998, p. 243). By rotating roles, students have the opportunity to learn how different members' roles effect the productivity of a cooperative group.

During a cooperative learning activity, a teacher needs to monitor group work. Wong and Wong (1991) state cooperative learning requires four basic elements to work:
“positive interdependence, social skills, individual accountability, and group evaluation” (p. 257). Positive interdependence means that the students are accountable for their own work as well as the work of their classmates. “Students learn to care about and become committed to other’s success as well as their own” (Wong & Wong, 1991, p. 255). Social skills are the ability to work with others without arguments. “The procedures and social skills necessary for effective group work also need to be taught” by the teacher (Cummings, 1996, p. 104). Students are individually accountable for their learning whether they are working together or alone. However, students working in a group all have to contribute to the workload.

Cooperative group work must be monitored. To monitor students’ achievement in gaining knowledge while working in a group, “students should still take their tests alone” (Cummings, 1996, p. 106). The learning groups need to be evaluated by the teacher and students. The teacher can give tests, monitor by circulating, and ask random group members questions. “Periodically, the groups must assess how well they are working together and how they could do better” (Wong & Wong, 1991, p. 257). The groups can discuss their roles and how the roles contribute to the outcome of the groups’ work.

Cooperative learning activities are productive in many ways. There are many positive outcomes of cooperative learning. Kellough and Roberts (1998) report,

When the process is planned and managed well, the outcomes of cooperative learning include improved communication and relationships among students of differences; increased academic achievement; quality learning with fewer off-task behaviors (p. 244).
Independent Work

Independent work is an important instructional strategy because it allows students to develop a project or an idea of their own. “There will be times when the students are interested in an in-depth investigation of a topic” (Kellough & Roberts, 1998, p. 333). A topic can be examined through independent study, individual writing, projects, and oral reports. Cummings (1996) responds to independent projects by stating, “instead of the ‘ditto queen’ using threat to coerce students into filling in the blanks, students become active participants in their learning when they design their own projects…” (p. 142). For example, students might be interested in astronauts and want to investigate space travel. In a classroom, students will have different interests associated with the same topic. Some students might want to know about how an astronaut’s body is effected by space, while another student would want to know about what astronauts have learned about the moon.

To make independent work effective, children should have projects where they are free to explore a topic of interest, but still have guidance from the teacher. “Unless students are given guidance, project-based teaching can be a frustrating experience for both the teacher and the students” (Kellough & Roberts, 1998, p. 333). A teacher needs a means to keep track of progress during independent work. An educator “…can keep track of students’ progress by asking them to give a weekly update of their work and set deadlines…” for completion of work (Kellough & Roberts, 1998, p. 333). A student will have a high frustration level and trouble maintaining a drive to complete an assignment without guidance from the teacher. However, “if a project is laid out in too much detail by the teacher, that project is a procedure rather than a project assignment” (Kellough &
A teacher needs to create a balance between guidance and free inquiring otherwise the students will not be learning to research a topic on their own.

Motivation in the Classroom

Another foundation for classroom management is motivation. "Motivation can be measured by the amount of effort a learner puts into a task" (Cummings, 1996, p. 135). A successful classroom contains students who are dedicated to completing tasks. A teacher should provide a motivating environment, because students participate more in classroom activities when they are motivated. Glasser (1990) stated when students are motivated they make higher learning gains and are more productive learners.

Motivation mostly comes from within a person. Intrinsic motivation is "motivation [that] comes from the inside-it's about wanting to do something" (Cummings, 1996, pp. 141-142). Highly motivated students expand their cognitive horizons, because they want to complete a task out of personal desire. Coil (1992) states that "giving the student a sense of personal autonomy and control over his or her successes and failure is a powerful motivator" (p. 67). Students who have high levels of intrinsic motivation are more independent than students who require motivation from other sources.

Not all students come to class with a personal desire to learn. "Teachers would love to work with students who were always intrinsically motivated to learn, but they know realistically that most of the time they will have to supply at least some motivation for their students" (Charles & Senter, 1983, p. 73). These students need to gain motivation for task completion from other sources. "Extrinsic motivation is supplied
from outside the individual” (Charles & Senter, 1983, p. 73). Therefore, a teacher can be a powerful source of motivation in the classroom.

**Model Enthusiasm**

The first way a teacher can spark enthusiasm in the classroom is to model high energy toward learning. Cummings (1996) believes “we learn many behaviors not from direct experience but from observing other people” (p. 121). When a teacher shows interest in learning then students will show interest in learning. An educator shows enthusiasm through body language and tone of voice. Research states, that “… 60% of how we come across is determined by body language; between 30% and 35% is associated with tone of voice, while only 5% to 10% of the meaning of the message is the message itself” (Mendler, 1992, p. 35). Enthusiasm is contagious when it is modeled properly. For example, a teacher can share personal learning experiences with the class while using vocal inflection. The energy behind a teacher’s voice allows students to be convinced that learning is endless.

It is more arduous for a teacher to change the level of motivation in their students. “Teachers can’t INSIST that students have positive attitudes… but they ASSIST them to do so” (Cummings, 1996, p.123). Each individual decides on a situational basis how much energy is going to be given to a task. The teacher can promote working hard, but cannot make the decision for students. Nonetheless, “teachers are responsible for trying to stimulate the interest and involvement of students who appear unmotivated” (Weinstein & Mignano, 1993, p. 82). “Cooperation is still a voluntary act” (Mackenzie, 1996, p. 127). Each student volunteers to cooperate with the demands presented by a teacher in the learning milieu.
Recognize Students' Needs

Students control their own level of motivation, because they are working to meet their individual needs, which might be different than a teacher’s needs. In fact, “…all human beings are born with five basic needs built into their genetic structure: survival, love, power, fun, and freedom” (Glasser, 1990, p. 43). These needs are transported into the classroom every minute of the school day. For example, “if what we are asked to do in school does not satisfy one or more of these needs or we do not care for the teacher who asks us to do it [a task], then we will do it poorly or even not at all” (Glasser, 1990, p. 44). The classroom teacher needs to find ways to learn about what motivates students. For example, a teacher can observe students’ behaviors, ask students questions, or have students write about their needs at school. This data provides information for the teacher to meet their needs.

The teacher’s main function becomes that of a person who guides students to evaluate their own motivation. The best teacher can “emphasize student accountability concerning behavior, work habits, and production of quality work” (Charles & Senter, 1983, p. 79). Students can learn that success is not always predetermined. Success is the outcome of hard work and high levels of intrinsic motivation.

A classroom teacher must provide students with opportunities to display their accomplishments. Children gain their requirement for “…autonomy, competence, self-esteem, and self-actualization by successfully completing classroom activities and assignments” (Jones & Jones, 1990, p. 164). Children have a need to be able to show others their capabilities (Jones & Jones, 1990, p. 165). The most significant situation a teacher can arrange is one that allows students to show off their success. For example, a
teacher can develop a “student of the week” program to recognize students who display scholastic behavior and responsibility. See appendix B for a model of a student of the week program.

**Goal Setting**

One way to increase students' motivation to learn, is to teach students how to set academic goals. According to Jones and Jones (1990), “people are more likely to become involved in activities that have a clear goal” (p. 169). If a teacher can help students see what their goal is during classroom activities, then students will know where they are headed. Goals give students direction. Once students see they are responsible for their own achievement, the visualized outcome of their hard work will be motivating.

A teacher can have students write their own goals. Just having students write goals for a semester will not increase motivation, because a semester is too prolonged for students to visualize their goals (Jones & Jones, 1990, p. 226). Students can fill out goal sheets to focus their goals. These sheets need to be done weekly or even daily at the elementary level. See Appendix C for an example of a goal sheet. Terry (1997) suggest a teacher “ask students to monitor and record progress, brainstorming ways to improve their performance and reach their goals” (p. 23). Later, the goal sheets can be revisited to see if goals were accomplished. Students should discuss their accomplished goals with the teacher or a classmate.
Providing Rewards

When students are able to display their talents they are then seeking some form of recognition. Acknowledgment of student growth often requires a system of rewards. Adding incentives to the classroom can improve student motivation. Evertson and others (1984) state “the improvements in class climate occurs because the incentives add interest or excitement to the class routine…” (p. 125). Rewards not only improve the educational climate they promote repetition of positive behaviors. “The use of rewards in classrooms is based on the psychological principle of positive reinforcement: behavior that is rewarded is strengthened and is therefore likely to be repeated” (Weinstein & Mignano, 1993, p. 88). There are many types of rewards that can be utilized in the classroom, such as symbolic rewards, material incentives, and extra activities.

Symbolic Rewards

The traditional symbolic reward a student can receive is a letter grade of an “A” on a report card. The “A” represents excellent academic achievement. This reward system is used as a long-term determinate of intellectual ability. The problem with the letter grade system is it does not provide the immediate feedback students need. So teachers should learn “…not expect report card grades to be the major source of motivation for most students…” (Evertson, Emmer, Clements, & Worsham, 1984, p. 128). A student may not be able to visualize that the work they complete today will affect the grade they receive in six to nine weeks. Therefore, students have to wait too long to discover they have been working to their potential, or they never reach that point because they have given up along the way.
A grade on a report card is not the only symbolic reward that is found in elementary classrooms today.

Elementary teachers use a variety of symbols to communicate a positive evaluation of student work. Examples include letter grades or numerical scores, happy faces, checks and check pluses, and stars and stickers with an appealing design (Evertson, Emmer, Clements, & Worsham, 1984, p. 128).

For example, a teacher can put a colorful sticker on students’ papers that successfully display their knowledge. Students’ pleasure for such an item is unveiled as their eyes gaze upon a supportive sticker attached to the upper section of a piece of work. This display of excitement shows students feel satisfied with a small token of praise. A reward does not need to be extravagant to furnish the sustenance students’ desire.

Material Incentives

Besides being delighted by symbols, students are also motivated by material incentives. Evertson (1984) claims “material incentives are objects of value to students” (p. 128). Human beings are materialistic by nature, so it is only natural that students will find appeal in material rewards. It is up to the teacher to determine what objects are of value to students, “examples include food, pencil(s) or eraser(s), discarded classroom materials, games, toys, or books” (Evertson, Emmer, Clements, & Worsham, 1984, p. 128). There is no limit to what materials are incentives for students.

Material incentives can be centered on a token economy. A token economy system, a reinforcement technique, where a teacher “give[s] students tangible tokens or symbols of rewards immediately following appropriate behavior” (Epanchin, Townsend,
An example of a tangible token that can be used in a classroom and behaviors students earn tokens for is found in Appendix D.

The token system is important because it allows students to receive instantaneous reinforcement. Tokens are “delivered immediately, but exchanged at a later time…” (Epanchin, Townsend, & Stoddard, 1994, p. 135). Thus, students earn tokens that can be saved and exchanged for a material incentive of their choice. Many teachers have a collection of objects in a class store or a treasure chest that can be opened at the teacher’s discretion. For example, a teacher might want to open the class store on Friday afternoons. This would be a time designated for students to purchase objects with their earned tokens or continue to save their tokens for a later date.

The only negative to the token economy system is it is expensive for the teacher to fund. One way to get around the added expense is to ask for parental donations or “stock” in the economy. Teachers can also seek the support of community leaders, businesses, or other means available through grants to provide reinforcement objects for the class store.

Material incentives can build the motivation of a single student, but a teacher can seize the motivation of an entire class. Students can work for the privilege of an extra activity, “for example, a field trip, party, or major group activity…” (Evertson, Emmer, Clements, & Worsham, 1984, p. 129). The class may also work towards an extended or extra recess. The earned activities may occur during the school day or after school. The possibilities for activities are infinite; however, several activities are limited by the fact that they “…require a great deal of planning, record keeping, or other preparation” (Evertson, Emmer, Clements, & Worsham, 1984, p. 129). In other words, the teacher
must be willing to devote time to devise a creative activity a group of multifarious students would be willing work to procure. Sometimes it is by chance that an activity draws the interest of such a diverse group of people.

The exemplary aspect about an activity reward is even the most non-compliant child is often driven to work toward this type of reward. This is a situation in which peer pressure has positive results. Peer pressure makes a teacher’s job easier, because “...positive peer pressure will encourage such a student to cooperate without the teacher having to resort to exclusion” (Evertson, Emmer, Clements, & Worsham, 1984, p. 127).

No one wants to be the child in the class that keeps the group from taking part in an activity. However, one child should not keep a group of hard working students from achieving their goal. In very rare cases, a teacher will have to exclude students from participating in an activity, and “if some students will be denied the activity arrangements must be made for their supervision” (Evertson, Emmer, Clements, & Worsham, 1984, p. 129). When removal must occur, the negated students will attend the class of a willing cooperative teacher.

**Giving Feedback**

Feedback is needed in the classroom. It “keeps students informed of their progress in school” (Prosise, 1996, p. 15). It can also be extended to keep parents informed of their student’s performance. According to Prosise (1996), “it [feedback] should be prompt, detailed, complete, and personalized” (p. 15). A teacher needs to give feedback soon after a task is completed. Feedback can be positive or negative. Positive feedback is the praise delivered by a teacher. Whereas, negative feedback is the
suggestions a teacher provides. Feedback can be rendered through verbal expressions, nonverbal gestures, or written comments.

**Positive Feedback**

A teacher can deliver positive feedback verbally in the public forum. For example, a teacher can tell students they are exceptional by making statements in front of the class. These comments serve as feedback for all students because they give a model of appropriate behavior or work ethic. The class can observe what a student is doing to gain the teacher’s approval. Then students can adjust their own behavior to follow the positive example of a peer.

A teacher may also deliver positive verbal feedback in a less public forum. For example, when a teacher is circulating the classroom, positive feedback can be given to students at their desks. This type of feedback allows a teacher to save students from feeling the pressure of their classmates. One-on-one conversing allows students to feel close a teacher’s impression of their behavior. It makes a teacher’s comments more personal and memorable. Most of all, verbal comments delivered less publicly “provide continual support, help, feedback, and encouragement to assist students over rough spots and keep them on track.” (Charles & Senter, 1983, p. 78).

Positive feedback can be given through nonverbal communication. A teacher can support students without saying a word. Educators send positive nonverbal messages that motivate students to keep working hard. For example, students love to receive smiles, winks, high-fives, pats on the back, or understanding nods. Nonverbal feedback is
immediate and does not require planning. It allows a teacher to give feedback in a natural way.

Another way a teacher can give positive feedback to students is through written communication. A teacher can write positive notes that can be delivered at school or sent home. In the technological age, teachers may want to send their students positive email greetings. Certificates are an example of written communication to students. An educator may want to create a certificate of accomplishment to give to a student. See Appendix E for an example. Written comments are beneficial because they are permanent when saved. Written communication is also appealing because it allows a teacher to “...point out students’ improvement and help them see the role of their effort” (Weinstein & Mignano, 1993, p. 83).

Constructive Feedback

Constructive feedback needs to be delivered in a supporting way if it is used at all. “Studies indicate that praising students’ work produces greater performance gains than does criticism” (Jones & Jones, 1990, p. 181). Criticism should be avoided because a teacher does not want to damage the self-confidence of students. “Studies also show that hostile or extensive criticism creates negative attitudes and lowers achievement, creativity, and classroom control” (Jones & Jones, 1990, p. 182). If a teacher feels constructive feedback is necessary, it should follow positive feedback. Coil (1992) believes a teacher must “emphasize those things that the student has learned, even if mistakes were made” (p.12). Students first need to know what they are doing well, before they will be ready to hear what they need to improve.
A teacher can use nonverbal constructive feedback effectively in the classroom to change behavior. Terry (1997) states, "eye contact, degrees of proximity, and unpredictable movement can enable you [a teacher] to keep all students on task..." (p. 22). Nonverbal body language allows a teacher to quickly change student behavior without a big scene. "An effective teacher's look, signal, or body language is all it takes to get students on task" (Wong & Wong, 1991, p. 167). A disapproving look with a head shake in misbehaving students' direction can indicate to students that they need to change their behavior. This look uses a frown combined with a stare to grab students attention. It is often all a teacher needs to do to get students back on track.

A teacher can provide suggestions for improvement, a form of constructive feedback, by writing comments on students' work. Students need to know what they are not doing correctly to see what they need to keep working on learning. If a teacher does not provide students with "frequent, specific, informative [written] feedback, they may spend valuable time doing assignments incorrectly" (Weinstein & Mignano, 1997, p. 157). Written suggestions can help students advance to the next stage in the learning of content. For example, a student might be writing sentences without capitalizing pronouns. A teacher corrects the student by writing capital letters on pronouns in the student's sentences. In preceding papers, a teacher notices the student is capitalizing pronouns.

**Feedback between the Teacher and Parents**

To develop a strong connection with parents, a teacher needs to use a variety of feedback techniques. Parents need to receive regular feedback on their child's progress. However, parents have valuable information pertaining to their child that they can rely to
the teacher. A teacher needs to receive feedback from parents concerning their child’s behavior at home. Strong verbal and written feedback needs to be practiced to build a partnership between the teacher and parents. A teacher can give written feedback to parents through newsletters, letters or notes, and report cards. An educator can give verbal feedback through phone calls and conferences with parents.

Written feedback is one of the most useful forms of communication a teacher can use to update parents. “Many teachers send home one-page class newsletters every month—or more frequently if possible” (Charles & Senter, 1983, p. 190). “Newsletters should be kept short and to the point, with attention to matters such as calendar dates, field trips, other special activities, holidays, and accomplishments” (Charles & Senter, 1983, 190). A teacher can have students’ help write the newsletter or include student articles, artwork, comics, or jokes.

Another form of written feedback that a teacher can use to increase communication with parents is a letter. At the beginning of the year, Bosch and Kersey (1994) suggest a teacher “send parents a questionnaire asking how they would like to be involved, what concerns they have about their child’s education, and what special skills they might be willing to contribute to the learning process…” (p. 102). For an example of such a questionnaire, see Appendix F. This questionnaire helps a teacher receive feedback from parents. However, parents also need to receive feedback from a teacher at the start of the school year. A teacher needs to write a letter, that introduces the teacher and classroom policies needs to be written. This letter can be sent home at the beginning of the school year. See Appendix G for an example of a welcome letter that includes
classroom policies. Letters can also be used throughout the school year to maintain communication.

A teacher can deliver a quick and short form of feedback by using notes to parents. “Personal notes are helpful for sending parents brief messages, reminders about snacks and money, and for calling attention to good student behavior and accomplishments” (Charles & Senter, 1983, 191). Notes are less time consuming to create than a newsletter or a letter, and parents like to receive positive notes from school. Teaching is a busy profession, so even a small note to a parent can be sufficient in maintaining feedback.

The traditional form of written feedback that is used in schools is the report card. “Every six to nine weeks a grade report is issued” (Kellough & Roberts, 1998, p. 481). A teacher gives students’ academic grades and also marks behaviors as “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory.” “In some schools, reporting is done by computer printouts, often sent by mail directly to the student’s home” (Kellough & Robert, 1998, p. 481). A teacher needs to follow the school’s format for report cards.

Written feedback is very helpful for informing parents of their child’s progress. However, a more direct form of feedback is occasionally needed. Verbal feedback allows both the teacher and parents to receive immediate feedback. A teacher can use the telephone to connect with parents. Phone calls can be helpful for delivering positive feedback to parents. A teacher can make it a point to call students’ parents once a month with a positive report. A positive phone call does not take much time to conduct, but it means a lot to parents to hear good remarks about their child.
A phone call home can also deter unwanted behavior from students. Evertson, Emmer, Clements, & Worsham (1984) state, "... a telephone call to a parent can have a marked effect on a student's behavior, signaling to a child that accountability for behavior extends beyond the classroom" (p. 173). When a teacher must make a negative phone call home clear information must be given to parents. A teacher must "describe the situation briefly and say that you [the teacher] would appreciate whatever support the parent can give in helping you [the teacher] understand and resolve the problem" (Evertson, Emmer, Clements, & Worsham, 1984, p. 173). Once the teacher and parents come to a method to fix a problem in school, the teacher and parents can begin to work together. A teacher should make follow up phone calls to relay progress or additional problems.

A conference is the most time consuming form of feedback between a teacher and parents. "Schools generally schedule one or two formal parent-teacher conferences during the school year" (Weinstein & Mignano, 1993, p. 279). A teacher needs to set up available time slots for each parent conference. Coil (1992) states that a teacher should "hold parent meetings at convenient times for parents" (p. 73). Then the teacher needs to allow parents to schedule the most convenient time for their conference. A teacher may also want to send parents a pre-conference letter and questionnaire. "Information about the parents' perceptions of their child's reactions to school and the parents' own wishes can also enable us [teachers] to be better prepared for the conference" (Jones & Jones, 1990, p. 144). For an example of a questionnaire and letter see Appendix H.

One of the most important tasks a teacher must do is develop an agenda for the conference. Jones and Jones (1990) suggest the following conference agenda:
1. Share positive personality qualities about the student.
2. Discuss the report card and examine samples of the student’s work.
3. Discuss the student’s behavior and peer relationships.
4. Time for any final parent questions or concerns.
5. Summarize the conference by discussing the student’s strengths, weaknesses, and areas that need improvement (p. 144).

This agenda allows a teacher to run a smooth conference with parents.

After a teacher has planned the agenda for the conference, materials on each student need to be organized. To give the best feedback possible, a teacher must do three things before the conference:

1. Prepare a folder for each child.
2. In the folder include: a summary of work covered to date; a profile of the child’s performance in that work; samples, good and bad, of the child’s work; and tests that back up your [the teacher’s] evaluations.
3. Make notes to yourself about anecdotes that provide insight into the child’s behavior and progress (Charles & Senter, 1983, p. 193).

By following each of the three steps suggested, a teacher knows exactly where each student stands in the classroom. The folder also provides visuals and records to show parents during the conference.

It is important a teacher knows how to interact with parents when they arrive for a conference. “Parents who had difficulty in school themselves may be intimidated by schools and teachers” (Evertson, Emmer, Clements, & Worsham, 1984, p. 149). A teacher needs to make parents feel welcome and show them that they are partners in the
child's education. Charles and Senter (1984) suggest a plan to make parents comfortable during a conference.

When the parent arrives:

1. Greet the parent in a friendly, relaxed manner.

2. Sit side by side with the parent at a table rather than behind a desk. This conveys a message of cooperation.

3. Begin by chatting about the child as a worthwhile person. Mention good traits. This reassures the parent.

4. Guide the parent through the student’s folder, commenting on work samples it contains.

5. Encourage the parent to talk. Listen carefully. Be accepting. Do not argue or criticize. Parents cannot be objective about their own child. You do not want to cause resentment.

6. Keep in mind that parents can be your strongest allies. Let the parent know you feel this way. Show that you, like the parent, want the best possible for the child.

7. End the conference by describing your plans for the student’s future progress. Earnestly request the parent’s help in supporting your efforts. Thank the parent for talking with you about the child (pp. 193-194).

No matter what type of feedback device a teacher chooses to relay information to parents, a teacher needs to keep a record of each time communication is made. A record allows a
teacher to document attempts to work with parents or help a student (Charles and Senter, 1983, p. 194). A written record validates the teacher as a professional and proves the teacher was not neglecting students. An example of a form that can be used to keep track of communication modes is found in Appendix I.

**Discipline in the Classroom**

When a teacher fails to ignite educational behavior in students, a discipline plan must be implemented. Discipline problems occur in schools for several reasons: “student boredom, powerlessness, unclear limits, lack of acceptable outlets for feelings, and attacks on dignity” (Curwin & Mendler, 1988, p. 7). Therefore, an effective classroom teacher establishes a plan to end problems.

**Creating Classroom Rules**

The first step a teacher needs to take to insure a route to discipline is to develop a set of rules. Rules are designed to keep a classroom running smoothly. A rule must be observable to be effective, because “vague rules are difficult to comply with and difficult to enforce” (Canter & Canter, 1992, p. 55). Nonetheless, “rules work best when they are behavioral and written in black-and-white terms” (Canter & Canter, 1992, p. 21). A good rule is stated clearly so it is understood by students. “When the limits are unclear, students will test the system to find out what they are” (Curwin & Mendler, 1988, p. 8). The last circumstance a teacher wants in the classroom is for students to test rules because they are unclear.
A classroom does not need an extended slate of rules. In fact, "...a long list of regulations can give students the impression that the teacher is more interested in increasing restrictions than in promoting learning" (Long, 1985, p. 35). A group of three to five rules is effective because it is easy to memorize. See Appendix J for an example. The most "...successful teachers have a minimal number of rules which are in effect at all times, in all activities, all day long" (Canter & Canter, 1992, p. 50). Basic rules can be applied to all aspects of the school day. For example, the same rules can be used at lunch, in the hallway, restroom, playground, gymnasium, school bus, or other locations.

The teacher can originate rules or students can be involved in a democratic forming of classroom regulations. The result of teacher dominated classrooms "...is that one group develops rules and procedures that define behavioral standards for another group that has had little or no input" (Curwin & Mendler, 1988, p. 8). When a teacher solely writes the rules for the classroom, "some students rebel as a way of voicing their dissatisfaction with their lack of power" (Curwin & Mendler, 1988, p. 8). Students gain power over the management of the classroom when they are allowed to voice their concerns. Students are more apt to follow rules they helped create rather than ones they are forced to behave under. At times, students’ rules may be stricter than the teacher’s rules. This is when the teacher must decide what is an appropriate expectation and guide children to give each other room to make mistakes.

Once the rules are created, they "...should be written and permanently posted in the classroom and given to students on paper or copied by students into their notebook" (Wong & Wong, 1991, p. 149). A teacher should also send a copy of their rules home for parents to review. See Appendix K for an example letter to parents. To make the rules
feel official, a teacher can request the students and parents sign a contract that the rules have been received, reviewed, and discussed. A contract of this form allows teachers to prevent students from claiming they were not aware of a classroom rule. Also, see Appendix L for an example of a contract.

Using rules in a classroom does not end with simply discussing the rules once and posting them. A teacher needs to repeatedly review the rules to keep students on the right track. Rules are developed so students comprehend how to conduct themselves in school. However, “most teachers have rules so students know what not to do, but rarely teach students what to do instead” (Curwin & Mendler, 1988, p. 9). Some students come to school not knowing how to behave. In schools, “we assume that they [students] know how to behave properly and forget that it requires skill and training to learn what to do…” (Curwin & Mendler, 1988, p. 9). It is the educator’s job to help students learn proper behavior by reviewing classroom rules and continuing to guide them to correct behavior.

**Administering Consequences**

Rules are ineffective if they are not backed by a consequence. A teacher hopes that consequences are not necessary. However, “the best consequences are reasonable and logical” (Wong & Wong, 1991, p. 157). The goal of consequences is to bring students to a renewed state of discipline. Mackenzie (1996) states,

Consequences are like walls. They stop misbehavior. When used consistently, consequences define the path you want your students to stay on and teach them to tune into your words (p. 164).
A teacher needs to make students aware of consequences for their actions before problems occur. Therefore, “planning for consequences enables the teacher to encourage appropriate behavior from the beginning of the year and to be in a position to act promptly to deal with inappropriate behavior when it occurs” (Duke, 1982, p. 26). When students are aware of consequences for their actions before a behavior violation they are given a choice; they can follow the rules or face the unpleasant results of their actions. Students know what will result when they break rules; therefore, they cannot blame the teacher for implementing a consequence. Consequences force youngsters to be responsible for their conduct.

When students have violated a classroom rule, they need to be reprimanded. There are ways a teacher can deliver a consequence better than others. For example, Curwin and Mendler (1988) suggest,

Nine Principles for Consequence Implementation: 1) Always implement a consequence: be consistent; 2) Simply state the rule and consequence; 3) Be as physically close to the student as possible when you implement a consequence: use the power of proximity; 4) Make direct eye contact when you deliver a consequence; 5) Use a soft voice; 6) Catch a student being good; 7) Don’t embarrass the student in front of his peers; 8) Be firm anger free when giving your consequence; 9) Do not accept excuses, bargaining or whining (pp. 95-98).

If a teacher follows the nine principles of implementation, the consequences should turn students’ behavior around. It is important that a teacher does not lash out on a student that is misbehaving, because “teachers who manage their frustrations by physically (or
verbally) striking out at students run the risk of teaching students to deal with their frustrations in a similar fashion” (Long, 1985, p. 100). A teacher should model the positive handling of misbehavior because it a great tool for teaching students to work out problems.

In some classrooms, a teacher may implement consequences and see ineffective results because the consequences were not delivered properly. When a teacher develops consequences for inappropriate behavior in the classroom, the policy must be taken seriously. Curwin and Mendler (1988) state,

Major causes of teacher failure to implement consequences: 1) the consequence is too harsh or incongruent; 2) rule violation occurs at an inconvenient place or time; 3) teachers are not policemen; 4) teachers sometimes lose their self-control (p. 71)

Students who create problems should be dealt with on an individual basis. A progressive sequence of events needs to be followed. For example, 1) on a first offense the student receives a verbal reprimand, 2) on the second offense the teacher has an private conference with the student, 3) the third offense requires a phone call, note, or conference with the student’s parents, 4) the fourth offense the student visits the principal. It is also appropriate for the teacher to include a severe clause in the classroom management plan.

Sometimes you have to act quickly and decisively to stop a student’s disruptive behavior. In causes of severe misbehavior, such as fighting, vandalism, defying a teacher or in some way stopping the entire class from functioning, a student would not receive a warning. He or she loses the right to proceed through the hierarchy of consequences. Severe
misbehavior calls for an immediate consequence that will remove the
students from the classroom (Canter & Canter, 1992, p. 87).

**Using Punishment in the Classroom**

Consequences are sometimes compared to punishments. However, punishments
are viewed more negatively, because something is delivered or taken away from students.
In some cases, punishments actually reverse the diligent work of a teacher, because they
create friction between the student/teacher relationship. “Punishment creates a militant
mentality, with student and teacher engaged in combat” (Cummings, 1996, p. 80).
School should not be a place for battle it should be a place for learning.

One punishment that creates a stigma in the teacher/student relationship is
corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is a form of physical punishment, where a
misbehaving student receives strikes like a spanking. In fact, “high levels of corporal
punishment and frequent disciplinary interventions led to worse student behavior”
(Curwin & Mendler, 1988, p. 11). The reason behavior problems grow with corporal
punishment is that children’s’ dignity is not being respected. It can be understood that
“when a student’s dignity is attacked, he will protect himself in whatever way he can,
even at the cost of his relationship with the teacher and possibly his education” (Curwin
& Mendler, 1988, p. 10). Students deserve to have “…someone who cares enough to
engage them beyond tossing them out of the room, scolding them or criticizing when they
behave in irresponsible, perhaps outrageous ways” (Mendler, 1992, p. 27). A teacher
must find milder punishment for the educational setting.

Some punishments can be used effectively in the classroom, as long a teacher is
cautious of students’ dignity. These types of punishments seek a resolution for out-of-