

ADVANCE PLANNING—BEFORE SCHOOL BEGINS

A major difference between effective and less effective teachers is the degree to which they have defined and communicated their expectations of students. An effective teacher knows exactly *how* he wants students to behave and *what* he hopes to accomplish during every activity. The following section will take you through a seven-step planning process to help clarify your expectations and develop a clear, consistent discipline procedure. The remainder of the chapter will focus on how to conduct the introductory activities on the first day and teach students how to conduct themselves during class activities.

PLANNING YOUR DISCIPLINE POLICIES

Step 1: List all types of classroom activities.

Identify every type of activity that might be included in your course. Rules and expectations will be designed on the basis of this list. Some of the activities that might be included are:

- Listening to lectures
- Participating in discussions
- Watching films
- Working on computers
- Participating in lab activities
- Working independently
- Taking tests
- Working on group projects

Step 2: For each activity, imagine how you would like students to behave.

For each activity listed, imagine how your class would look if it were composed of only mature and cooperative students. This class would be composed of the full range of academic abilities, but within that range, all students would be motivated and responsible.

In imagining how an ideal class would function, you will be identifying your precise expectations for student behavior. For example, are students talking during independent work times? If so, how loudly? How many people are involved in a conversation? For how long? How much off-task behavior is occurring? How much laughing and joking is going on? If you know your expectations, you can define them for the students. Clarity will reduce the need for students to test you and will help you respond more consistently to the testing that does take place. Examples of the types of questions you should answer when imagining your expectations for a given activity follow.

- Listening to lectures:
 - Are students talking?
 - Are students raising their hands to ask questions?
 - Are students working on other tasks while you are lecturing?
 - Are students taking notes?
- Doing independent work:
 - Are students talking? How loudly? To students how far away?
 - How are students getting help?

Are students out of their seats? For what reasons?

What are students doing when they have completed tasks?

Continue imagining how you would like each activity to look if you had only mature and responsible students. Once you know how you would like students to participate in class activities, you are on your way to teaching students to meet your positive expectations.

Step 3: Design classroom rules.

If you have completed Steps 1 and 2, you have a firm idea of how students should conduct themselves for each type of activity. Write four or five positively stated rules that reflect these expectations. A positively stated rule implies to students that you expect them to function in a mature and responsible way. Below is an example of a set of positively stated rules.

1. Always give every task your best effort.
2. Cooperate with other people in the class.
3. During independent work, work quietly at your desk until your work is completed.
4. Raise your hand if you have something to say or need help.

Avoid stating rules as negative expectations using the word "don't." A rule that specifically addresses a negative behavior tends to communicate a negative expectation. "Don't talk while someone else is talking," tends to imply, "I expect you to be rude and to interrupt people; don't do it."

Because the potential list of misbehaviors is endless, negatively stated rules also tend to be unmanageable. Massive "don't" lists make it difficult to respond consistently to misbehavior. If rules are negatively stated, students may feel a need to challenge every "don't."

Positively stated rules will be relatively broad and general. They will serve as an overall expectation, not a specific code for students to follow. It will be your responsibility to teach students what "cooperation" and "give every task your best effort" mean. Specific procedures for teaching students to translate general rules into actual behavior will be discussed later in this chapter. For now, it is important to write four or five positively stated rules that inform students they are with a teacher who will demand their best—who will not tolerate anything less.

Write your rules neatly in large, bold letters and post them permanently in the front of the classroom. Posted rules let students know they must work to meet your expectations throughout the semester. This is also a visible demonstration to students that there may be different rules in different classrooms, but that in your room the rules will be consistent and enforced.

If you wish to have students design their own rules, wait until the third or fourth day of classes. In the meantime, post temporary rules so students know what is expected for the first several days. Throughout the term, it is perfectly acceptable to modify the rules, using student input if you wish. The major goal of classroom rules is to be fair to students by clarifying and encouraging acceptable and productive behavior.

Step 4: Design consequences for severe misbehavior.

Identify three to four misbehaviors that you feel very strongly about, and their specific consequences. On the first day of class you will need to discuss these behaviors and

their consequences with students. For ideas on designing consequences, see Chapter 8, *Classroom Consequences*. Your list might look like the following:

Hitting or fighting—Referral to the office

Direct defiance of the teacher—Referral to the office

Talking during lectures or study time—Three minutes owed at lunch

While you do want to avoid addressing a long list of "don'ts," it is important to include a few. If students have no idea how you will respond to misbehavior, they will test you to find out what will happen. If this occurs, you must either provide a consequence that has not been discussed or let the misbehavior go by. If you implement a consequence for the misbehavior, students may feel, justifiably, that they have not been treated fairly. If you fail to implement a consequence, students will feel that misbehavior is acceptable. It is obviously better to discuss the consequences for intolerable behavior beforehand. Students need to be informed.

If some of the behaviors you identify are already covered in the school's discipline policy, you may choose to omit them from your list. In class, it will be important to let students know they are accountable for every behavior discussed in the school discipline policy as well as the additional behaviors you have identified.

Note: This list of misbehaviors should not be posted. Post your positive expectations, but not the negative behaviors and consequences. Posting the negative behaviors can serve as a reminder to some students to engage in the misbehavior. Simply inform the class about consequences for misbehavior. If students misbehave, implement the consequences for misbehavior quickly and firmly and then focus on teaching students to behave appropriately.

Step 5: Design a grading system that encourages motivation and participation.

Students must learn that their behavior in class and their effort and cooperation will affect grades in a positive or negative manner. It is important for students to know that their actions and performance will be monitored and evaluated. Students must see that the teacher is keeping systematic and ongoing records of their performance in class. For information on setting up such a grading system, see Chapter 2, *Effective Grading Systems*.

Step 6: Design routines for assigning and collecting in-class assignments and homework.

Late papers and incomplete assignments are a problem in most secondary schools. Teachers frequently find themselves nagging students with little or no result. Routines for assigning and collecting work can increase the probability that students will turn completed work in on time. An example of a regular routine: The teacher can lecture the first half of class and then provide class time for assignments due at the end of each period. Homework might be assigned every Monday and be due every Thursday, assigned every Thursday and be due every Monday. Routines encourage students to become self-disciplined by following a set schedule. Early in the term, students will learn to organize their homework routine, as your expectations will be very clear.

Without a set routine, students may have heavy homework assignments one week and no assignments the next week. This lack of consistency makes it difficult for students to plan their time. Only the brightest and most mature students can adjust to a continually shifting pattern of work. The majority of students need the security of daily and weekly routines.

Students also perform better when they are given short assignments due on a relatively frequent basis, rather than long assignments due at the end of each week or at the end of the term. The more immature your students, the more important it will be to break homework assignments into small increments.

If your students have difficulty getting homework assignments in on time, it may be necessary to ask parents to help monitor work that should be completed at home. A regular routine will make it possible for parents to determine whether their children have completed assignments.

Routines do not take the spontaneity out of teaching, nor do they restrict teachers from adjusting lessons to the needs of students. When a break in routine is needed, you will find that it is refreshing for everyone. To have a break in routine, however, you must have a routine in the first place. Establish a daily routine. Get students adjusted and then provide periodic breaks as needed.

Your routine should include procedures for assigning work. Students can learn to check a section of the board each day for homework and daily class assignments. Another effective method for giving assignments is to provide a worksheet at the beginning of each week listing all assignments for the week. In some cases, you could even require that students have the sheet signed by their parents. This ensures that parents are aware of course requirements throughout the term and can intervene if students are having difficulty completing assignments.

You must also have a regular routine for collecting assignments. Students must see that any work assigned will be collected on the day it is due. There is nothing more discouraging to students than to work hard to meet a deadline, only to find their work isn't collected until two days later. Work must be collected at the beginning of the period. This will help students plan to have work completed prior to the time they enter the classroom. This alleviates the problem of students trying hurriedly to complete work during your other class activities.

Finally, it is important to record completed work as it is handed in. One method for collecting and recording work is to have students hand in assignments as they enter the classroom. You can record their work as you are greeting the students at the door. Another efficient method for collecting papers is to have students hand in assignments as you call their names for roll. You can record completed assignments and attendance simultaneously.

Step 7: Prepare activities for the first day of classes.

The way you conduct the first day of class leaves students with a lasting impression and usually sets the tone for the remainder of the semester. It is important to communicate encouragement, warmth, and firmness. Students must recognize that you have high expectations, tempered by an understanding of their making mistakes and having limitations. By showing concern and efficiency, you will demonstrate that class time will be used as effectively as possible. Students must understand that you take learning very seriously and expect them to take it seriously as well. This step will help you design activities for the first day to ensure that the semester gets off to a good start.

- *Prepare an easy task for students to work on when they first enter the classroom.* Tell students to work quietly on the assignment until you have completed roll. If students have to get to work as soon as they enter the classroom, they will learn that every minute of class will be used as effectively as possible. This task can be something as simple as the Student Information Form shown in Figure 1-1. You should suggest that the last part