

# SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES CREATING A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Creating a safe learning environment is critical for being proactive in preventing behavioral disruptions and difficulties in your classroom.

Three major components in creating a safe learning environment are:

- Structuring your classroom environment;
- Teaching behavior; and
- Effective classroom management strategies.

## STRUCTURING YOUR CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

It is important to make sure you consider the way you structure your classroom environment. This consideration is often overlooked, but is a very important step in creating a positive classroom atmosphere that supports learning for all students. Designing your classroom around the needs of your students will help improve student outcomes and make their school experience more enjoyable.

### TIPS FOR TEACHERS

To help structure your classroom environment, some things to consider include:

- How you use and organize classroom furniture;
- How students access materials;
- Relevance of visual displays;
- Temperature and lighting of classroom; and
- How the classroom environment makes students feel (Is it welcoming?).

### REFERENCES

For more information regarding structuring your classroom environment, visit the websites below.

[responsiveclassroom.org/sites/default/files/et4ch1.pdf](https://responsiveclassroom.org/sites/default/files/et4ch1.pdf)  
[scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/classroom-organization-physical-environment/](https://scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/classroom-organization-physical-environment/)  
[sanjuan.edu/cms/lib/CA01902727/Centricity/Domain/7227/classroomlayoutchecklist.pdf](https://sanjuan.edu/cms/lib/CA01902727/Centricity/Domain/7227/classroomlayoutchecklist.pdf)

## TEACHING BEHAVIOR

You have to teach appropriate behaviors by the design and implementation of classroom procedures, and by intentionally teaching and reinforcing appropriate behaviors. Establishing consistent classroom procedures provides students with predictable expectations and can prevent disruptive or inappropriate behaviors. Teaching these expectations and appropriate behaviors should involve the same strategies you use to teach academics.

### TIPS FOR TEACHERS

After developing classroom procedures, teach students these desired behaviors by:

- Explicitly teaching;
- Modeling;
- Providing opportunities to practice;
- Offering feedback; and
- Reteaching, as necessary.

### REFERENCES

For more information on successfully teaching behavior, visit the websites below.

[pbis.org/school/tier1supports](https://pbis.org/school/tier1supports)  
[educationworld.com/a\\_curr/doe/behavior\\_page6.shtml](https://educationworld.com/a_curr/doe/behavior_page6.shtml)

## EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Effective classroom management strategies help students know what is expected of them and supports time on task. Effective classroom management strategies also help ensure students have little time and opportunities to misbehave and disrupt instruction.



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## TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- Employ direct supervision and engage students in multiple modes of instruction (visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile);
- Post classroom rules and procedures in your classroom;
- Be consistent;
- Break instruction and tasks into manageable blocks;
- Use oral prompts, especially during transitions;
- Use discrete gestural or physical prompts to redirect students (i.e. shoulder tap, teacher proximity);
- Use of visual prompts to keep students on task and on-schedule (i.e. daily class schedule, steps to an activity);
- Acknowledge and praise **RULE FOLLOWING** in the class. Don't focus only on **RULE BREAKING**.

## REFERENCES

For more information on effective classroom management strategies, visit the websites below.

[interventioncentral.org/behavioral-interventions/challenging-students/teacher-behavioral-strategies-menu](http://interventioncentral.org/behavioral-interventions/challenging-students/teacher-behavioral-strategies-menu)  
[thoughtco.com/classroom-management-reduce-student-discipline-7803](http://thoughtco.com/classroom-management-reduce-student-discipline-7803)

## INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)

Remember, the IDEA requires the IEP team to “*address behavior that impedes his or her learning or that of others*” (IDEA Section 614(d)(2)(B) ). Challenging behavior can be addressed in many ways for those students who are on an Individualized Education Program (IEP). If you have concerns for a student on an IEP, collaborate with the special education teacher to discuss and address the behavior(s) with additional goals, accommodations and/ or a behavior intervention plan (BIP). The IEP team will

need to determine the best way to target the undesired behavior that is impeding the learning of the student or others, and the necessary strategies and supports to improve behavior.

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

The following are questions you may want to address at the beginning of school. By allowing time for students to answer these questions, you will have a better understanding of the students in your classroom and students will have an opportunity to express any concerns or difficulties they would like you to know.

1. What are some ways I deal with frustration and/or anger?
2. When I am frustrated, what is one thing I can do to self-regulate?
3. What is the one class I am having the most difficult in?
4. What is one thing I wish teachers knew when my frustration level is high?
5. What could my teachers do to help me have a successful year?

## QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

These questions are for you to use as a self-reflection activity.

1. Is there a certain time during the day when behavior problems increase in my classroom?
2. Have I set clear expectations for my classroom?
3. Do my students understand what I expect from them daily?
4. Do I have too much idle time in my class?
5. Do I need to rearrange my classroom? Do I have too much clutter? Too many visuals? Are the materials in the class easily accessible?

