Transformative Classroom Management

The natural condition of any classroom is harmonious, satisfying, and productive, so why do so many teachers struggle with problems of apathy, hostility, anxiety, inefficiency, and resistance?

In this groundbreaking book, education expert John Shindler presents a powerful model, Transformative Classroom Management (TCM), that can be implemented by any teacher to restore the natural positive feelings in his or her classroom—the love of learning, collaboration, inspiration, and giving—and create a productive learning environment in which all students can achieve.

Unlike other classroom management systems that view problems as something to be "handled," TCM offers suggestions for creating optimal conditions for learning, performance, motivation, and growth. This practical book shows teachers how to abandon ineffective short-term gimmicks, bribes, and punishments and adopt the proven management practices and new habits of mind that will transform their classrooms.

Praise for Transformative Classroom Management

"Transformative Classroom Management is a practical resource that explains the how and why of classroom management for novice and veteran teachers. Dr. Shindler recognizes the importance of preserving the teacher's sanity while ensuring the student's development of a personal sense of responsibility and a positive self-esteem."

—EILEEN MATUS, principal, South Toms River Elementary School, New Jersey

"I have read many other management books by other authors, but Transformative Classroom Management has been the best so far at demystifying the invisible forces in the classroom."

—WILL MCELROY, 4th grade teacher, Los Angeles Unified School District

"This book was an invaluable tool for me during my student teaching. It served as a reference book that I found myself continually drawn to while struggling to find ways to effectively manage 29 first graders. The ideas, concepts and suggestions in the book were so innovative and helpful that even my Master Teacher found herself implementing some of the ideas! A must have for all student teachers!"

—CAROL GILLON, student teacher, Seattle University

"Insightful and thoroughly researched, Transformative Classroom Management is an invaluable tool to help teachers, newbies and veterans alike, develop fully functional and engaged learning communities."

—LISA GAMACHE RODRIGUEZ, teacher, Los Angeles Unified School District

JOHN SHINDLER, Ph.D., is associate professor at California State University, Los Angeles, the co-director of the Western Alliance for the Study of School Climate, and the chair of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Special Interest Group for School Climate, Culture and Community. He is also a regular contributor to educational journals including Educational Leadership and National Forum of Teacher Education Journal.

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Transformative Classroom Management

Positive Strategies to Engage All Students and Promote a Psychology of Success

JOHN SHINDLER
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TRANSFORMATIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
Positive Strategies to Engage All Students and Promote a Psychology of Success

JOHN SHINDLER
About the Book

This book is your guide to creating the transformative classroom. It is a synthesis of what I have seen to be effective in the area of classroom management. It reflects my own experiences as a teacher, observations of hundreds of classrooms, my research, and the best ideas that I have read or heard. This book is intended for those who work with young people now or plan to. Practicing teachers, preservice teachers, parents, administrators, support staff, and coaches may all find it useful.

The content of the book is intended to cover the topic of classroom management comprehensively—from the practical techniques for achieving ease, clarity, and smoothness, to the more transformative techniques that will lead to student growth and development; from helping students with a habit of disruptive behavior to increasing each student’s level of motivation; from the practical steps for developing classroom rules to a comprehensive system for creating a classroom community.

At the heart of the book is an examination of what it takes to create a psychology of success within our students individually and collectively. This concept, explained in Chapter Seven and revisited throughout the book, provides the framework for what is required to achieve transformative classroom management results.

I have been an educator for twenty-five years, from kindergarten to the university level. I have been in hundreds of classrooms and have taught thousands of students. When I reflect on what I have observed over the years, I find much of it perplexing. I have witnessed smart teachers who struggle with classroom management. I have observed skilled teachers who elect to use strategies that create more problems than they solve. And to this day I see too many great ideas that are seldom used.

I have concluded that what makes a teacher successful in one school is the same thing that makes a teacher successful in the next school. There is an operating assumption that classroom management is complicated because some things work with some kinds of students and some things do not. It is true that all students are unique and group dynamics, cultural backgrounds, and experiences vary—sometimes dramatically. But for the most part, sound ideas get positive results and unsound ideas get mixed results at best. Some ideas can seem promising but fall short of translating into effectiveness because at their core they are flawed. As a teacher, I used many of these flawed ideas and even defended them because I believed that they worked. But time, experience, and the chance to research and reflect (a chance that too few of us get) have given me a perspective that I did not have when I began my teaching career. Some of the insights in the book have come as sudden flashes of inspiration. Most have come from watching teacher after teacher apply particular practices and observing what occurred as a result.

I have found that not all ideas sold in the marketplace of classroom management strategies lead to desirable results. In fact, many of the most popular ideas result in more harm than good. For that reason, parts of this book are devoted to explaining why many of the most popular ideas in use today are flawed, and what to do instead.

In each chapter are reflections within the text that relate to the content immediately preceding it. Reading and reflecting on the material give readers an opportunity to process the information in more depth.

At the end of each chapter are journal prompts, which will help readers process what they have read. Some or all of these prompts may be assigned as part of a teacher education course to promote retention and provoke a deeper examination of the content.
About the Book

Finally, each chapter includes at least two activities, which are intended to help those working independently or in groups to process the content of the chapter, synthesize material, or create components of a classroom management plan. Practical guidelines are offered for the development of such products as a classroom social contract, a process and participation assessment system, a set of logical consequences, and a series of technical management strategies.

This book rather quickly enters some relatively uncharted territory: the realm of teacher thought and mind-set. I have chosen to venture down this road for two primary reasons. First, the vast majority of our activity each day occurs between our ears. If we are intentional about what we do in the classroom, we will be much more effective. Second, I have found that what primarily keeps teachers from effectiveness or growing into the kinds of professionals that they would like to become is most often found in the domain of their thought processes and habits. What holds us up is not usually a lack of information or insufficient talent but patterns of thinking. The beginning of the transformative classroom will be a transformative mind-set on the part of the teacher. The book will guide the development of that mind-set as it outlines practical strategies for producing high levels of function and effectiveness within the classroom.
About the Author

John Shindler, Ph.D., is an associate professor of curriculum and instruction in the Charter College of Education at California State University, Los Angeles. His areas of expertise include school climate and culture, school improvement, teacher education, learning and cognitive styles, classroom management, and teacher leadership. Shindler is the chair of the Special Interest Group on School Culture, Climate and Community at the American Educational Research Association. He is cofounder and director of the Alliance for the Study of School Climate and author of several school climate assessment instruments and articles. Shindler is the developer of the Paragon Learning Style Inventory and author of several learning styles articles and resources. He is a former elementary, middle school, and high school teacher.
Acknowledgments

I first thank all of the teachers and students whom I have worked with, observed, and talked with over the years. You have all challenged me to grow. It would be impossible here to mention all of you or acknowledge your ideas, insights, and practices. That would take a whole book in itself.

I thank my friends and the members of my family, especially my parents, who have been exceedingly supportive. You have all been very patient with me through the more than five years of writing this book. Bruce Brown has been a pioneer, a mentor, and a dear friend. Finally, I could not have done this without the help of Trina, my wife and master editor. Her love, support, perspective, and encouragement have been invaluable.

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PART 1
Assessing Where We Are and Making Sense of the Inner Workings of the Classroom
Introduction to Transformative Classroom Management

In This Chapter

- Introduction
- Transformative classroom management
- Developing a guiding personal vision
- The progression of the book

This book offers strategies to make your classroom a place that changes lives for the better: a transformative classroom. It will demystify the process of creating a high-functioning classroom and will be your guide to creating the kind of class environment that you desire.

CASE STUDY

Ms. L's Transformative Elementary Class

What first strikes a visitor to Ms. L’s urban public school third-grade class is the low level of anxiety and high level of confidence among the students, which allows them to take risks and express themselves. Today the students return to the classroom after recess and take their seats without any need for direction. After a smooth transition, the class is directed into a math lesson.

In contrast, the third-grade class next door comes back from recess somewhat rowdy and unfocused, and the teacher immediately begins to call out students who are misbehaving. The students finally open their math books after an extended transition.

(Continued)
During the lesson, only a few students volunteer to share their ideas because they worry that they will look incompetent, and the teacher interrupts the lesson many times to deal with misbehaving students.

Back in Ms. L’s class, every student appears engaged and eager to share answers and ask questions when they are not clear about the material. The energy in the room is almost entirely focused on the activity, and no students feel the need to entertain themselves or their friends by misbehaving. Ms. L is calm and soft-spoken and refrains from any hint of negativity. She leads the lesson with questions that keep the students engaged and thinking critically, and there is a distinct flow to the activity. Throughout the lesson, the students look forward to being intellectually challenged.

If we had the ability to examine every classroom in every school, we would find that they vary dramatically from one another. We would find classrooms in urban, suburban, rural, public, and private schools, from every grade level and subject area, kindergarten through twelfth grade, that were functional and productive places. In the same sorts of schools, we would also see dysfunctional and unproductive classrooms. If we were to identify the variable in each class that was most responsible for the quality of the learning environment, we would find that it is we ourselves: the teachers. Our thoughts, values, and actions all have the effect of defining the climate and experience in our classes. Too few of us truly appreciate the ultimately powerful influence that we have, and we too often neglect to recognize that our classroom management choices can have a number of important effects:

- Promote community or fragmentation
- Lead to clarity or confusion
- Create a psychology of success or one of failure
- Be a liberating influence or perpetuate an unjust social class structure
- Foster a climate of motivation and joy or one of disinterest and drudgery

Researchers have found that classroom management actions and attitudes can be the difference between teachers having either a sense of job satisfaction and a feeling that their gifts are being successfully used or a feeling of burnout and unhappiness (Friedman & Farber, 1992). Moreover, how teachers approach classroom management will significantly determine the degree to which they feel successful and satisfied with their teaching (Fallona & Richardson, 2006).

**READER NOTE**

The reflections throughout each chapter offer you opportunities to reflect on the ideas presented in the text in relation to your own experience. They are a means by which you can process the content in the chapter in a practical and personal manner. Some of you may want to skip over the reflections on the first reading, especially if you are attempting to progress through the chapter at a quick pace.
WHAT IS TRANSFORMATIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT?
To understand what makes a classroom a transformative place, we might begin by examining the four case studies in this chapter. All four teachers have created what could be characterized as transformative classrooms. As you read about each classroom, notice their common attributes: clarity of purpose, self-responsibility, bonds among students, and an increasing level of function over time. In other words, they promote skills that are critical for success both in and outside the classroom.

CASE STUDY
Ms. R’s Transformative High School Social Studies Class
Ms. R teaches social studies in an urban public high school that is considered low performing by most measures: its dropout rate is above 50 percent. But in Ms. R’s class, students are working collaboratively. The students are from different cultures, neighborhoods, and cliques within the school, but in Ms. R’s class, they function as a unified team. When this same group of students was observed the period before, they seemed to be mentally checked out and unruly. In that class, the teacher appeared to struggle with control, spending a lot of time raising his voice and threatening the students about what would happen if they didn’t get to work. In Ms. R’s class, in contrast, the students were entirely invested in the task and prepared when it was time to report their group’s findings. Maybe the best words to describe the class are trusting and respectful. The students respect each other, their teacher, and their learning, and they know that their teacher trusts and respects them.

A transformative classroom functions to change for the better those who are within it—as individuals and as a collective. Transformative classroom management (TCM) is an approach that assumes that classroom management practices have a powerful long-term effect on student development and teachers’ ability to be successful. It presumes that over time, high function is possible in any classroom; that some pedagogical and management practices lead to greater function, while others lead to greater dysfunction; and that if designed successfully, any classroom can be a transformative place.

TCM, unlike many other models, assumes that problems do not require reaction; rather, the sources of those problems need to be identified and altered. Problems within any class should not be viewed, as some would suggest, as a finite quantity of misbehaviors that need to be “dealt with” or “handled.” Both functional and problematic or dysfunctional behaviors have
explicable causes and in most cases are related directly or indirectly to teaching practices. Most problems are manifestations of predictable factors, including the interaction between teacher or school and the student, the systems in place, congruence between the expectations of the students and teachers, and the degree to which the class meets the students’ basic needs. TCM places a special emphasis on perpetually working toward a better tomorrow.

**REFLECTION**

Have you seen classrooms that you would characterize as transformative? Reflect on the kinds of classroom management practices that occurred in them.

Figure 1.1 depicts the three domains of change within the TCM classroom. First, the transformative classroom supports each student’s individual progression from irresponsibility and a “failure psychology” orientation to self-responsibility and a “success psychology” orientation: an internal locus of control, sense of acceptance and belonging, and growth orientation (Ayling, 2009). Second, the transformative classroom promotes the growth of the collective from its current state of function to one of greater function and ultimately into greater levels of community. Third, TCM endeavors to assist teachers in their own growth toward greater levels of self-awareness and a more effective and intentional set of practices, and it provides them the tools to become visionary leaders in the classroom.

**DEVELOPING A GUIDING PERSONAL VISION**

The process of creating a high-functioning transformative classroom begins by developing a vision of what you want to accomplish. To do so, it will be beneficial to take a few preliminary steps:

1. *Clarify your intention.* What do you specifically want? When you reflect on this question, it is useful not to let your thinking be overly restricted by what others tell you is possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement and Growth</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td>Failure psychology</td>
<td>Success psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irresponsible</td>
<td>Self-responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dysfunctional behavioral patterns</td>
<td>Functional behavioral patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class or other collective</strong></td>
<td>Dysfunction</td>
<td>Function</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent survival</td>
<td>A connected community</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Egocentric</td>
<td>Contributors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td>Reactive or accidental</td>
<td>Intentional and aware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short-term survival</td>
<td>Long-term vision</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Leader</td>
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**FIGURE 1.1. The Domains of Transformative Classroom Management**
or not possible, or what you have become accustomed to through practice or observation. Allow yourself to conceive a vision that is guided as little as possible by fear and resignation and as much as possible by what you think is right. What kind of classroom would make you proud and would give you a sense of being true to your core values?

2. **Be purposeful about raising your level of awareness.** If you have not yet started teaching, you might want to observe a broad range of classes in a variety of schools. It is common for teachers to default to practices to which they were exposed themselves, so recognize that what you have seen to this point may have been a limited sample of what is possible. See what is out there. And if you do not see your vision operationalized within the classrooms that you observe, it may mean that you are in the position of making a significant contribution as a trailblazer. If you are currently teaching, this book will offer many opportunities to reflect on what you are doing and why. Exploring both your internal processing as well as your external situation will be useful. More effective practice begins with an examination of who we are and what we value, followed by taking stock of what we are doing and asking ourselves if it is getting us closer to our vision.

3. **Recognize that every practice has an effect.** Every choice you make shapes the overall classroom climate. Even the smallest action can have a profound impact on the behavior, motivation, and achievement of students.

**Stick to Your Vision**

Each of us possesses our personal vision of the ideal classroom. For most of us, that vision is rather ambitious and was part of what inspired us to work with young people as teachers, coaches, counselors, administrators, support staff, and paraprofessionals. Yet as we confront the realities of schools over time—the lack of motivation of many students, the discouraging attitudes of some of our peers, the difficulty of the job—many of us increasingly become resigned to relinquishing that ideal vision and make compromises that we never wanted to make out of a perceived need for survival or what seems to be practical necessity. However, what you want to accomplish is possible. You can get there. There are answers and pathways to making your vision a reality.

**REFLECTION**

Take a moment now or after reading this chapter to envision your ideal classroom. What does it look like? What is going on in it? How do you feel as the teacher?

**GAINING PERSPECTIVE**

Common sense and teaching experience are valuable, but in most cases, they alone are not sufficient in helping us succeed at translating our classroom management vision into a reality. Good intentions and common sense do not necessarily lead to good practice. If they did, we would see mostly excellent teaching and classrooms free of conflict and full of motivated students. And experience does not necessarily lead to improved practice over time either. If this were the case, we would observe that the most experienced teachers would be the most effective classroom managers. In some cases this is true, and the value of experience cannot be underestimated; however, in many cases, more experience simply leads to repeatedly applying the same flawed principles and practices day after day.
Moreover, adding isolated management strategies here and there may or may not result in improvements. We need to ask ourselves, “To what are we adding them?” Without a foundation that supports a positive strategy, the strategy itself may not bring about the positive effect that we desire, or even have a desirable effect at all. Having in place a sound set of guiding principles for action and thinking is necessary for independent practices to be effective and to function as part of an integrated whole. Furthermore, in most cases, our classroom management will be more positively affected by what we cease doing rather than something we add to our repertoire.

**The Natural Condition of Classrooms**

The natural condition of any classroom is functional, harmonious, satisfying, and productive. It exists beneath the various sources of dysfunction, stress, and strain in each classroom and is most often masked by the effects of ineffective management practices and the negative student reactions that result from them. Apathy, struggle, hostility, anxiety, inefficiency, and resistance, while common, are essentially unnatural conditions that are brought about by one or more dysfunctional ingredients present in the class. In other words, they are normal but not natural. The positive feelings that exist in any class—the love of learning, a desire to collaborate, the experience of achievement, inspiration, the joy of contributing, and growth—are all natural states. This is not to suggest that teaching is naturally easy or that an effort to promote a classroom that characterizes more of this natural condition will cause problems to disappear overnight. In most cases, the process of creating a high-functioning class is challenging and entails a great deal of commitment and effort. But the closer we get to it, the more normal that natural state becomes.

In addition, we need to be wary of advice that includes the phrase, “Well, it works.” The fact is that anything can be said to “work.” Every sound and unsound practice that is being used by teachers today is defended with, “It works.” But the question should not be whether a particular practice works; the question to ask is, “Is this practice getting me closer to my long-term management goals and vision?” In many cases, justifying a classroom management practice based on the rationale that it works is often a smokescreen for using an ultimately dysfunctional practice only because it is familiar or convenient. Many popular strategies have genial-sounding names, such as *token economy, praise, behavioral charts,* and *reward systems.* However, as you will see throughout the course of this book, a close examination of these practices reveals them as having detrimental long-term effects. We might ask ourselves whether we are looking for practices that will sweep problems under the rug, lead to domestication rather than growth, deceive students temporarily, or make us feel better or justified. Or do we want our management practices to have long-lasting effects that change the lives of our students for the better? Isolated quick-fix strategies can be helpful for ameliorating problems, but in some cases, they can disguise the true source of a problem or, worse yet, limit the growth of the students toward more evolved behavior.

**Reflection**

1.4 How would you answer the question, “What does it mean when a classroom management practice ‘works’?” Was it more difficult to answer this question than you first thought? Why?
Results from a study of twenty-one urban schools comparing the effects of different forms of classroom management practices found that transformative classroom management practices produced both a higher-quality school climate as well as greater student achievement when compared to other types of practice (Shindler, Jones, Williams, Taylor, & Cadenas, 2009). Appendix G outlines the results. Regardless of the grade or the neighborhood from which the students attend, the use of practices classified as transformative encouraged a wide range of desired outcomes including better student-teacher relations, better student-student relations, higher-quality instructional practices, and a more positive attitude and culture at the school. These effects were absent or demonstrated to a much lesser extent by the use of other more “traditional” methods.

THE PROGRESSION OF THE BOOK

The progression of this book is designed to be developmental, and all of the chapters are inter-related. The sequence of content is intended to support new teachers in the development of a personal classroom management plan and experienced teachers in the process of reforming and improving their classroom management practice. It begins with chapters intended to promote self-assessment and the development of a personal vision and set of intentions. It then offers a series of chapters that address essential elements of successful management, including the practical steps in creating a democratic classroom. This is followed by chapters that address specifically what it takes to achieve the qualities of a transformative class.

CASE STUDY

Mr. T’s Transformative Elementary Class

Mr. T teaches fifth grade in a suburban public school. What an observer first notices is that he has given control of the class almost entirely to the students when it comes to making decisions and solving problems. He calls his class “Mr. T’s Tribe.” He commonly gives his class collaborative problem-solving exercises and simply watches from the sidelines. The self-directive skills that the students demonstrate are evidence of a great deal of training, practice, and reflection, but by this point in the year, Mr. T finds himself needing to intervene very little. One of his tools is a participation assessment system that incorporates a clearly defined rubric for high-quality behavior. After a couple of months, almost all of his students have developed the habit of working at the highest level defined in the system, which is characterized by a student finding ways to help others succeed. As a result, most of the students in the class have internalized the notion that their success is contingent on their ability to contribute to the group and support others.

Part One provides you an opportunity to assess your current beliefs and practices, form a vivid guiding vision, and set a path for improved practice. Chapter Two addresses how to move from less effective to more effective classroom practices. This chapter examines the nature of the effective classroom and what types of practices lead to function or dysfunction. Throughout the book, you will be encouraged to recognize the advantages of those practices that lead to increased levels of effectiveness and function, as well as the problems that are generated by the use of dysfunctional practices characterized by either teacher passivity or teacher domination.
Part Two begins in Chapter Three with an examination of the fundamental dynamics of the classroom environment, including the idea that “we teach who we are.” This chapter looks at the nature of social and indirect learning dynamics and how to harness its power. Chapter Four compares common strategies for developing clear and shared classroom expectations, examines which strategies will be more effective in this process, and considers why shared expectations are the cornerstone to successful classroom management. Chapter Five addresses technical management: the strategies that promote a culture of listening and respect and ensure that every student is attentive, on task, and responsible and the entire class functions efficiently on a practical level. Chapter Six explores motivational strategies, and Chapter Seven looks at how to create a psychology of success in students. We will explore how each teaching act promotes or undermines students’ psychological orientation to learning and achievement and the practices that are likely to produce each result.

Part Three begins in Chapter Eight with examining how to create a functioning democratic classroom. At the heart of any functional class is a set of common understandings and a sense on the part of students that they are responsible for being accountable and contributing to the collective. Through the development of a shared social contract, clear expectations, a sense of purpose, and a set of logical consequences, any class can achieve the qualities of a high-functioning democracy. In Chapter Nine, a distinction is made between punishments and logical consequences, and a process is outlined for developing logical and related consequences that will lead to more responsible student behavior and a stronger social contract. Chapter Ten outlines a system for implementing the social contract and promoting student responsibility, the key to a functioning democracy.

We begin Part Four by examining in Chapter Eleven the connection of instruction, assessment, and classroom management. The starting point for this discussion is the idea that teachers who are more effective pedagogically have fewer problems. In this part, we examine the relationship between how we teach and how it affects our management. Also, we explore how instructional and managerial choices work to either reinforce or liberate the social class structure and the students within that structure. Chapter Twelve presents practical ideas for leading and managing cooperative learning.
Chapter Thirteen, the first chapter in Part Five, addresses how to work with conflict and students who are considered difficult by some teachers. Conflict is a natural part of life in and out of the classroom and can be a source of growth or result in suffering. Some students come to us with habits that require a greater degree of intentional effort on our part than others. In Chapter Fourteen, we examine how to bridge the gap with students who appear disconnected and help students who have developed a pattern of negative identity learn to re-form the processes they have used to reach their goals and encourage them toward healthier, more functional behavior patterns.

Part Seven looks at how to synthesize the strategies outlined in the previous fourteen chapters into an approach for achieving a transformative classroom. Chapter Fifteen explores how to successfully implement a student-centered management approach and promote classroom community. Chapter Sixteen offers an in-depth exploration of the relationship between our thinking patterns and our effectiveness and job satisfaction. In many respects, the level of function or dysfunction in our classrooms will be a reflection of our own thoughts, attitudes, patterns, and beliefs. Here we discuss how to make our thinking an ally in the process of reaching our goals rather than a self-limiting hurdle.

A series of online resource articles related to specific issues in transformative classroom management is available at no cost to readers at trasformativeclassroom.com.

- “Developing and Implementing an Effective System for Assessing the Quality of Student Process, Participation and Behavior” provides an extensive step-by-step system for assessing investment, effort, and the process aspects of tasks. It explains why attempts to assess these kinds of outcomes must be sound and intentional or should not be attempted at all.
- “Why to Stop Using Colored Cards and Names on the Board Systems, and What to Do Instead” explains the many fundamental and practical problems related to the use of these popular behavior assessment systems. A sounder and more effective alternative is offered.
- “Competition in the Transformative Classroom” offers an in-depth analysis of competition in the classroom and provides an explanation of the difference between the healthy and unhealthy use of competition.
- “Moving Up the Continuum from a 4-Style Approach” will be helpful to those who find themselves relying on a dominating and teacher-centered approach. The 4-Style approach is characterized by a “boss” personality and relies to a great extent on personal confrontation with students. This style is explained in more detail in the next chapter.

The book finishes with a series of appendixes that include a question-and-answer session (Appendix A), a comparison of sound versus faulty management assumptions (Appendix B), an analysis of the use of the phrase “it works” (Appendix C), and analysis of the use of the term “the real world” (Appendix D), a catalogue of sources of classroom drama (Appendix E), an introduction to the Transform Your School schoolwide behavioral system (Appendix F), and results of a study demonstrating the effects of TCM on school climate and student achievement (Appendix G). Transformative classrooms can exist in isolation and can still be powerful as independent entities, but when an entire school adopts a transformative mind-set and set of practices, the burden for each teacher becomes lighter and the results become more profound.

In the next chapter we will examine the Teaching Style Matrix, and the four possible teaching styles, and classify classroom management strategies by their tendency to create more or less function and effectiveness.
Each chapter in this book ends with Journal Reflections and Activities. These sections are intended to help you engage with key ideas in the chapter. A journal can be a valuable asset in processing your thinking more deeply. The activities may be helpful as you develop your own personal classroom management plan or teaching improvement plan.

**Journal Reflections**

- In what ways has school had a transformational effect on your life? What events were responsible for that effect? Why?
- What do you want to accomplish through reading this book?
- Have you ever been part of a transformative context—for example, in a classroom, team, group, project, or committee?
  - If you have not, the notion of creating one in your classroom may seem somewhat abstract. But as you apply the principles and practices from the book, you will begin to better recognize what it is.
  - If you have had this experience, what was it like? Many of those who have will tend to judge each successive context by that standard. This is very often true for students. Those who have been part of a transformative classroom are changed permanently. Reflect on why this is the case.

**Activities**

1. Develop a personal vision for your ideal classroom. Do not be too concerned for now about limitations that you feel are present in your school or the kinds of schools in which you see yourself working. Paint a detailed picture of how it looks and feels. What kind of work is going on? How does it feel in the class? What do teacher-student interactions look like? What is the climate in the room?
2. In a small group, discuss the following question: Do you see evidence of a transformational mind-set in schools in general? How do you explain your findings? What is either encouraging or discouraging this mind-set?

**REFERENCES**

Classifying Approaches to Classroom Management and Moving Up the Teaching Style Continuum

In This Chapter

- Introducing the teaching style matrix
- Function versus dysfunction
- Raising the level of function and examining the roots of dysfunction
- Things to start doing
- Things to stop doing
- Examining the effects of our thinking
- Horizontal axis: Teacher centered versus student centered
- The four management approaches
- Comparing the advantages of a 1-Style versus 2-Style approach
- Moving up from a 3-Style approach

Each teacher has a personal style of teaching and classroom management, and much of the style will come from his or her own unique personality. However, a great deal of what we might call classroom management style comes from attitudes and pedagogical choices. In the domain of personality, each of us can find ways to translate our personal style into an effective teaching demeanor. Yet in the domain of choices and attitudes, some styles lead to substantially different outcomes than others (Harris, 1998).

REFLECTION

2.1

How would you characterize your teaching style or the style that you would most like to employ—or both?
In this chapter, we examine how the classroom management choices that we make, as well as our orientation to discipline itself, will determine the results that we will achieve. To help support this examination, it will be useful to incorporate a four-quadrant classroom management style matrix.

This classroom management style orientation matrix, depicted in Figure 2.1, has proven useful as a tool for classifying the management orientations and strategies teachers use (Shindler et al., 2004) and will provide one of the fundamental frameworks for the ideas and concepts in this book. The matrix is formed by the intersection of two continua or axes. The vertical axis of the matrix represents the level of effectiveness and function of the management practices. The horizontal axis represents a continuum of theoretical orientation defining each approach or style, from more student centered on the left to more teacher centered on the right. The intersection of these two axes produces four distinct teaching style quadrants. It should be noted that on the level of personality, any personal style could be fit into each of the four quadrants. However, as we will explore, each of the four styles represented by the quadrants produces dramatically different results in practice.

**VERTICAL AXIS: EFFECTIVENESS AND FUNCTIONALITY**

The vertical axis of the matrix is related to the continuum of effectiveness and function of the management practice. At the top of the axis are the most effective forms of practice, defined by high function, sound relationships, high levels of motivation, and high productivity. At the base of the axis are the least effective forms of practice, defined by low function, relationship dysfunction, low motivation, and a lack of productivity (see Figure 2.2).

What contributes to one’s placement on this effectiveness continuum? When the classroom management performance of teachers in the field was examined, three factors were found to predict effectiveness (Shindler et al., 2004). These factors were related to the following three domains:

1. Orientation and dispositions
2. Teaching choices and practices
3. Thinking and assumptions
First, effective teachers have an orientation to teaching that is defined by a sense of responsibility and intentionality. Second, effective management relates to a great extent to the quality of methods and strategies that teachers choose to incorporate and the effectiveness with which they are applied. In this chapter, we examine practices that lead up the continuum and others that leave one mired in the realm of ineffectiveness. Third, our attitudes, assumptions, and patterns of thinking substantially determine our ability to realize effectiveness and function. Each of these three factors is interrelated, but we will examine them independently.

**Orientation and Dispositions**

The degree of classroom management effectiveness and function were found to relate to the orientations taken by the teachers and their dispositions related to teaching (Shindler et al., 2004; Shindler, Jones, Williams, & Taylor 2009). High levels of effectiveness were related to the degree to which the locus of control of the teacher is internal rather than external and the level of intentionality of the system of management. Therefore, the peak of this axis represents practices that are less accidental or reactive and more systematic, deliberate, and reflective of an increasing level of teacher ownership for student outcomes. We examine both of these subfactors in more depth.

**Responsibility and Internal Locus of Control.** If you talk to a teacher who does an effective job of classroom management and possesses a high degree of self-efficacy, you will hear in his or her words the underlying convictions: “I believe it is about what I do” and “I am responsible for helping my students succeed” (Gettinger & Kohler, 2006; Henson, 2001; Yoon, 2002). The frame of mind that is expressed in this attitude is both internal—“Success will be dependent on the investment I make in my variable in the equation”—and responsible—“My job is to help every student succeed.” Contrast this to the mind-set of a teacher who, after a sufficient amount of training and practice, still demonstrates ineffectiveness and experiences a high level of student failure. In most cases, the attitudes that these teachers express are both external—“There is nothing that I can do with these kids”—and irresponsible—“It is not my fault.”
Greenwood (1990) found that teachers who believe that they, and other teachers in general, can motivate students to achieve give less evidence of stress and exhibit more internal locus of control than do teachers who believe that neither they, nor other teachers, can affect student performance. In a study by Guskey and Passaro (1994), the most significant predictor of teacher efficacy was the degree to which teachers assigned the cause of the outcomes in their class internally rather than externally. Although success in the area of classroom management will have a great deal to do with training and the methods we choose to employ, our underlying attitudes related to responsibility and locus of control will be the foremost determining factors in our success. Simply put, success is impossible without the mind-set that teachers are responsible for their students’ learning and behavioral outcomes.

**Reflection**

Think about teachers whom you consider excellent. How would you characterize the language they use when they speak about their students and their profession? Does it reflect a more internal or external locus of control?

**Intentionality and Consciousness.** More effective teacher practices are demonstrated by those who know what they are trying to accomplish and how they intend to accomplish it. That is, they are intentional in their practice (Richardson & Fallona, 2001). This approach is in contrast to practices that are shortsighted, reactive, and unconscious and could be described as accidental. Intentional practice is characterized by efforts undertaken within a larger scheme that integrates each specific teaching act (Pajares, 1992). An accidental set of practices has no such coherence and amounts to little, if anything, beyond a series of disconnected strategies. This lack of vision creates a lack of confidence and a feeling of discontinuity in the students; in other words, they have a sense that they are part of a class that lacks leadership.

**Effectiveness Versus Dysfunction in Classroom Management**

Classroom management effectiveness is defined as a learning environment that promotes learning, motivation, and collective function. Classroom management dysfunction is defined as any event, behavior, pattern, feeling, or thought that prevents a teacher from being able to teach to his or her fullest potential or keeps the class from learning in the most liberated, satisfying, and effective manner.

**Teaching Choices and Practices**

Not all classroom management strategies will get you where you want to go as a teacher. Some will lead you up the effectiveness continuum, and others will keep you treading water or can even promote greater degrees of dysfunction. In this section, we examine practices that lead to the highest levels of sustainable effectiveness and those to avoid.

Management practices come in three types:

- Effective practices that we do that we would want to keep doing.
- Effective practices that we do not yet do, or do not do very well yet (that would affect improvement), that we would want to begin doing.
- Ineffective practices that we do but need to stop doing because they are limiting our success or in some cases actually leading us down the effectiveness continuum.
9. Create communal bonds and community within the class.
8. Move from a manager role to a leader role.
7. Intentionally promote a psychology of success.

Transformational Ideas: Moving to the Next Level

6. Teach and practice your management procedures.
5. Facilitate the collective social bonds and social contract among students.
4. Create a (basic) needs-satisfying learning environment.
3. Incorporate pedagogy that supports your management goals.
2. Be a source of consistency.
1. Create clarity in all areas of teaching.

FIGURE 2.3. Management Practices That Contribute to Movement Up the Continuum

Moving Up the Continuum to a More Functional Approach. As you examine the list of management practices that will contribute to movement up the continuum (represented in Figure 2.3), you will see few quick fixes on the list. Effective practices create a fundamentally more functional classroom and produce increasingly more effectiveness over time. They have the effect of empowering students and bringing out their best. Truly effective practices not only promote better student behavior but also help students become fundamentally better individually and collectively. The following six practices increasingly and sustainably raise the level of function in a class. In addition, three strategies for moving to the highest level on the effectiveness continuum are introduced.

1. Create Clarity in All Areas of Teaching. Most of the outcomes that you desire in your classes depend to a great extent on your ability to promote clarity within your environment. Clarity within the classroom has been found to correlate positively with student achievement, level of engagement, and student satisfaction (Hines, Cruickshank, & Kennedy, 1985; Shindler et al., 2009). And most classroom management dysfunction is related to a lack of clarity in some form.

The existence of clarity can be seen to mitigate dysfunction in four key areas. First, students need clear expectations. Without them, they are forced to guess. This can create a vacuum in expectations, which students fill with their own ideas of conduct. When we use abstract terms such as responsibility, respect, or good behavior without defining those concepts in a concrete and material way, these ideas remain abstractions. Much of what we call misbehavior is simply students guessing how to act in ways that we do not like (in other words, their guess was wrong). Second, you need to infuse a sense of intention and movement to the class. When the class experiences the deliberate movement toward a goal, they are much less likely to be bored or distracted, or feel their work lacks purpose. Third, students need to be given clear boundaries. Boundaries help students understand where lines exist (Bluestein, 1999). In their absence, problems arise. In part, this is due to the fact that inevitably students come to any class with a wide range of previously learned behavior and expectation for boundaries. Fourth, abstractions, such as respect, listening, effort, and responsibility, need to be operationalized, or they will remain abstractions. Many teachers complain that their students lack these traits, yet do not make the concepts concrete and practical for their students. Clarity can exist only in
a concrete and observable world. Words can only point to behavior. Clarity therefore requires an intentional effort on your part to make that which is abstract, conceptual, and assumed into something that is concrete, behavioral, personally relevant, and collectively shared.

2.3 REFLECTION

Recall the last class that you observed that you would call well managed. Did you get the sense that the students had a clear sense of the expectations? Recall the last class that you observed that you would consider poorly managed. Did you get the sense that the students had a clear sense of the expectations?

2. Be a Source of Consistency

If the element of consistency also exists in a classroom, things will run relatively smoothly (Evertson & Emmer, 2003). Even a flawed set of strategies, if applied consistently, will result in relatively effective results. How are classroom function or dysfunction and the idea of consistency related? First, the consistency of one’s actions promotes or detracts from another’s overall sense of whether a person is trustworthy. Part of being trusted by students is being reliable. When a teacher’s decision-making process is perceived as too subjective or random, students lose trust, and that usually translates ultimately into a loss of commitment on the part of the student. Second, a teacher who follows through and consistently implements consequences is essentially making the concrete and practical statement that the class’s social contract, class rules, bill of rights, or some other similar agreement is primary and the teacher’s subjective interpretation is secondary. Third, reinforcing more functional behavior is necessary when teachers are working with a student or a class to help shape behavior. In many cases, even a small amount of contradictory reinforcement can undermine your efforts. Consistency helps clarify the cause-and-effect thinking you are trying to build. Inconsistency confuses it.

2.4 REFLECTION

A useful principle related to consistency is that it is not the severity of the consequence that will make it effective but the certainty. Consider the consequences that we negotiate every day. Typically we take those that are certain more seriously than those that are more severe but less likely. For example, imagine if you were a driver who had a tendency to drive faster than the speed limit. Which intervention would be more likely to modify your behavior:

- Your car was equipped with a meter that fined you a dollar for every mile your car went over the limit?
- You knew that a patrol car on the route you usually travel to work gave $1,000 tickets to a handful of speeders each year?

3. Incorporate Pedagogy That Supports Your Management Goals

If you offer students a curriculum defined by monotonous tasks, mindless busywork, and exclusively teacher-directed learning, expect problems. Students involved in passive learning often use disruptive behavior to achieve a sense of control, engagement, satisfaction, and fun. Students who are engaged, challenged, and see real value to their work will be much more interested in learning than