

Classroom Management 101



by Ayopeju Falekulo

How to manage student behaviour.



Stop Using the Cane 4

Managing student behaviour is a very important aspect of the job of any teacher. The professional teacher, is in the classroom because he/she wants to impact the lives of children in their classroom. Ultimately, the child needs to learn different skills. Learning cannot happen in an environment that is disorderly and full of children misbehaving. It is therefore absolutely important for teachers to learn how to manage their classrooms efficiently. If the classroom is disorderly and student behaviour very poor, the ability to learn and gain academic success becomes very difficult and sometimes impossible. No teacher wants this on their CV.

Now the discussion of not using the cane has been quite interesting. I think that we still have a long way to go in order to get to the bottom of this issue. I am hoping that this post will give us a few pointers to help us gain control of our classrooms so that we can manage our classes and enable our children to become disciplined members of the school community. We all agree that the children need to be disciplined. The ultimate goal is for them to learn and for us to guide and teach. The responsibility lies on the teacher to help the child learn though. So how do we achieve this? Let us consider two important points to help us achieve our goal.

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1. First thing to consider is our attitude and conduct as a teacher and adult. It is absolutely important for us to be the authority figure in the classroom. This is not achieved through negative emotional responses to the children. We must leave our problems at the gate and not react to everything that the children do wrongly, remember that even now we still make mistakes. We must understand the developmental stages of the children. A teacher in the 3 to 4 year old class, for example, will be dealing with children who think the world revolves around them and only them. They want immediate self gratification, they cannot understand why you would refuse them or ask them to wait. There are strategies to deal with this kind of behaviour, shouting and getting angry are not the best options. You can distract them, as they have short attention spans. Once we know what they like and love, we can get them to disengage from some inappropriate activity. So we need to spend some time getting to know the children in our classroom. Luckily our first week in school will not be filled with just lessons, there should be revisions and question times, story time, reading time, discussion time and spending time with each student, this will also help. We cannot plan effective lessons anyway without knowing our students. We need to reflect on what we learn about them and then plan to implement changes and lessons plans to suite the children we have in the classroom. Once our children are aware that we care about them and know them they are more likely to cooperate and engage.
2. We must plan and intentionally think through what we want to achieve with our class. If we plan and think ahead, the next thing to consider during the first week of resumption are the classroom rules. We must ensure that we have high but achievable expectations and let the children know right from the onset. We must set the tone of the class right from the beginning. It is wrong to wait until they misbehave before we start correcting them. We must set out the rules, engage the children and draw up the classroom rules together. This is another great way to start getting the older children in the primary classes, to do some writing and hand-writing exercises, while we are setting up the right setting environment and atmosphere for our classrooms. We will discover that the children now take ownership of their behaviour, the problem of misbehaviour, and having to waste time correcting them instead of teaching real content will become a thing of the past, after a while.

As a teacher we will need to continue to reflect on our daily experiences, get advice from mentor educators, change what doesn't work and transform our classrooms into a vibrant setting where children are happy to be with us all day and we are joyful because our children are learning. We will be happy and fulfilled because we are achieving that wonderful goal of changing and impacting the lives of the children in your classrooms through our effective classroom management. Try this first if you are not already, you will be pleasantly amazed at what will happen. Professional classroom management takes time and perseverance.



How to Manage Student behaviour in Primary schools.

Someone once asked the question, 'How do we manage the primary school child in our classroom?' Well the answer is simple, treat them fair and right and they will give you little or no problems....

Is that really true?

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I have found that when you are proactive, children behave better than when we react to situations around them. Plan ahead of time and you will find that if you are in a Primary school classroom you experience a better time with them.

You see, your six to twelve year old still loves to learn, they are not disenchanted yet with teachers and the school setting. It is what you do with them in the classroom that will decide what kind of students they will grow up to be in Secondary school and beyond, unless intervention happens.

Using the cane on children of this age group is probably common practice. It is not an effective way of helping children develop healthy behaviour patterns. If you want your students to acquire good behaviour practices, it is best to try and do the following:

The Primary school aged child is a social learner, he prefers to learn in teams and not alone. They want to know about the world and how to live and cope in it. This is the time that we teach them to learn to live in peace with others. They must learn to resolve conflict and control their emotions. We must really understand them in order to help get them to where they need to go without breaking their spirit and stopping them from acquiring the skills they need to learn successfully.



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1. Make sure your lessons are engaging: Please do not plan a lesson where you are going to be talking for 40 mins non stop and then you spend 20 mins dictating notes. If this is what you are doing then expect lots of trouble, because these children are not ready for this lecture style teaching. They will get bored, idle and you will be cultivating the wrong atmosphere for good behaviour. Fast forward to the teacher who has taken time to prepare an engaging hands on lesson, and then you give them a mini project and get them to write their notes using suggested keywords! These children will be concentrating, engaged and totally loving it. There would be no time for misbehaving.
2. How you correct wrong behaviour will impact greatly on classroom discipline, don't shout at the children. We must as the adults model good behaviour if we want the children to do the right thing. They will do what we do not what we say. Count to 10 do not react to their rudeness or misbehaviour with annoyance, wait to deal with the problem if necessary pull them aside just outside the door to deal with issues. But my advice is to tell the student who erred to see you later.
3. Start your classes with stating your expectations for the year. You will get better results and behaviour if the children know what to expect and what you expect. Do not have low expectations. Come up with your classroom rules together. Let them know the consequences of wrong behaviour and make sure you keep to it.
4. Give the children responsibilities, ensure that you are promoting independence rather than dependence. This helps to build their self worth, value and confidence. A confident child is happy and at peace with the world, such a child usually will not misbehave, well within reason, we all misbehave sometimes, don't we?
5. Build up a great rapport with the children in your class. They are open at this age to engage with their tutor at this time in their life. Make good use of this and be a great example for them.
6. Enable the children to work together and build great team rapport among themselves. This is exactly what they need to grow at this point. Team work is a skill that is needed in the workplace. Teamwork is the best learning strategy and psychological base for the primary school child.
7. When they have misbehaved either among themselves or with you, your adult approach to the misbehaviour will help a lot. So do not give in to your annoyance or anger, instead stay calm. Countdown from 10. Instead of getting angry and shouting, you may want to ask you student how you can help them! This would be the last thing they would be expecting. That one question may just stop all the misbehaviour midstream!
8. Notice when your students are having a bad day and help them out by giving them a break, rather than expecting them to deal with it and move on, just like that. Empathy helps. Something may be going on at home. Your care at this point may help to save the day and bring your child back to the job at hand, learning.
9. Ensure that your children are quiet and ready to listen, do this by giving them enough time to settle down. Good classroom behaviour starts with you the teacher, just being patient can help you in numerous ways. Instead of shouting over the din of students voices to start a new lesson, why don't you just tell them to be quiet, wait until they take the cue from you and keep quiet? They may not keep quiet immediately but they will do so eventually, especially when their classmates start telling them to keep quiet for you!
10. Spend time with the child in informal ways, do not be the teacher they have in the classroom but whom they do not see taking turns during break, circle time, assembly and break time. One of the most crucial times you should try and build a presence with your students is during Lunch break. Don't miss it. You get to know them better and they engage with you more if you are out there with them. If they know you care about them playing and not just reading and writing, children tend to pay better attention to what you are saying.

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The goal is for our children to grow up well-balanced, well-behaved with good moral standards right? We can do this without having to always resort to using physical punishment, the cane to be specific to get this result.

During the last two weeks my fourteen year old has been a bit under the weather to say the least. We just got out of hospital on Sunday and will need to go in today and Friday for some other check ups etc. I have been privileged to spend much more time with him than I would have and I am grateful for it.

When he got home on Sunday, even though he was still in need of some tender loving care, it was apparent that we needed to help him understand that recuperation time was not to be spent only in front of the box watching films and playing games. So we mapped out a plan that would give him time to rest, have fun and learn as well. He has been keeping to the script though I have had to call him back to the drawing board at least once since Sunday.



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1. **Spend time getting to know the children/students in your care** But we are supposed to be talking about classroom management right? So why are we talking about my son? Well because to me it is the same thing and also my experience with teenagers is from dealing with them at home in the family. I consider all children I work with as my children so to speak, I treat them as I would treat mine. So the nuggets I will share with you concerning the older children will be drawn from my personal experience. It works.. They will never ever be interested in what information you want to impart, if they do not think and know that you care about them. The time we spent in hospital together enabled us to connect on a deeper level. I believe he understands me better now, he knows that I deeply care about his well-being. I am actually supposed to be in Nigeria right now, but had to postpone the journey to take care of him. My actions have spoken clearer than my words. They call me “Mama Monte” , Monte is their shortened word for Montessori. They know how passionate I am about my work, but I put that aside to be by his side, as any mother would of course, yet that has made an impression on him. He knows me, watched me work even as I looked after him. He asked me questions about my work and I answered. He wanted to know why I did things in a certain way, I answered yet again, helping him to see why work was important, how it related to productivity and the effort it took to make money. He listened. I knew he got it when we read the daily devotional together and prayed this morning because he could relate what he learnt to what he needed to do about his learning.... They are watching us. They learn more if we open up to them and let them see us and we show them we care. You are a unique person, you are not just the teacher!
2. **Plan your classroom rules together.** This is even more important for the older children and if it works for the younger ones, of course it would not be wise to come to class with classroom rules drawn up by you and you only. Yes your classroom may not be a democratic field so to speak, but even in a democracy the leader who performs and achieves the most is the one who listens to the people and carries everyone along. You will have your list, but ask them to draw up theirs. Most of what is on your list will be covered, they you add the missing ones by saying something like, “Wow, this is a great classroom guide, mmmhh, what if we add...? What do you think?” Be sure to add acceptable behaviour and unacceptable behaviour practices. Talk about consequences of bad behaviour and not following the classroom rules. They will add it, in their own words. Let them write them out and design what will be pasted on the notice board. You are helping them express themselves another lesson in creative writing, use of grammar and English Language will take place as you complete this task. You would have gotten them working as a team, building community and unity in the classroom. Well done.
3. **Have a Goal Setting Session with your class.** What are your goals for the children in your care? Where do you see them in the next 12 months, what do you want them to achieve? Your job is to move them on from where they are to where they need to be. Inspire your children. Let them see that you have a goal for them. Ask them about their goals. Teach them to make goals. Show them practical ways they can do this and achieve them. These goals should be specific and measurable, they should also have a plan in place to get there. Take it a step further by getting them to pair up in groups to keep them accountable. Have review sessions with them to see how they are doing. Now I am sure that if this is what you do with your children, you will have less issues with bad behaviour and discipline. This is because the children are now more focused on producing great results and fulfilling their dreams than fooling around and being naughty.

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I am not saying that they will be perfectly well behaved at all times, but I am saying you will see better behaviour all round. When they do not do the right thing, they will mostly correct themselves because , they made the rules. You will find that life is easier. Even when they would put up a fight, your relationship and rapport that is growing gradually will take over for you and make for an easier way to get to the heart of the matter and change things around.

My son just came to ask for pancakes a few minutes ago!!! I want to finish up this post and get the image done so I can publish. So we reviewed what we had to get done, and came up with a plan, he does his work, I do mine, then I make the pancakes before we go off to the hospital for an appointment. We are both happy. I am getting him to do what he needs to do without using the cane on him and increasing my blood pressure unnecessarily.

To find out more

Ayopeju Falekulo is the Director of Studies at Addlo Montessori Training Center, which is your one-stop home for all things Montessori. We help both Educators and Parents get the full benefit of the Montessori Method through our online training and various platforms.

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