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# 1. Developing a Vision

## Classroom Organization

Classroom organization and management are essential elements of strong teaching and meaningful learning.

A well-organized and capably managed classroom requires teachers to envision how they and students will interact with each other, with the materials to support learning, and with the content or focus of the learning. To build this vision and take it into action, teachers must consider three different stages of organization and management:

Before	<i>What routines and procedures do teachers need to consider before students arrive in the classroom each year and each day?</i>
During	<i>How will students and teachers function during class time as they interact with each other and with the learning situation?</i>
After	<i>What can the teacher do after the students leave to ensure the smooth transition from one day to the next?</i>

## The Need for Routine

Routine offers students a familiar environment, one with clear expectations, and a sense of knowing what to do.

### Tips for Establishing Routines

1. Before the school year begins, think about classroom routines.
2. Teach the necessary classroom procedures in the first few weeks of school.
3. Model what is expected: walk students through the process and post visual supports, identifying key words to remind students of the expectations and the steps.
4. Give students many opportunities to rehearse procedures.
5. Tell students specifically what they are doing well and how they can improve.
6. Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of routines; reinforce or adjust as necessary throughout the year.

## Routines

Think about each of the routines listed below from two different points of view: first, consider the importance of each routine and the impact each has on the learning environment; then, consider your satisfaction with each routine in terms of your own classroom practice. For each of the items listed there should be a routine or a procedure that is clear and that students can follow. If your current routines are not working, or you don't have a clear routine in a particular area, consider establishing a new one.

- Entering the classroom
- Distributing materials
- Borrowing/signing out books from the class library
- Clearing up materials
- Asking for help
- Transitioning between activities or tasks
- What to do when students finish a task early
- Signaling the end of an activity
- Participating in a discussion

- Refocusing or getting students' attention
- What to do when you are late
- What to do when you are absent
- How to use certain equipment
- Working in small groups
- Responding to questions
- Posting assignments/homework
- Locating work missed due to absence
- Handing in work
- Handing back work
- Keeping your desk or work space neat
- Leaving the classroom
- End of day/period dismissal

This book offers many suggestions for routines to try. Other good ideas might come from discussions with your colleagues about their classroom practices.

## 2. Planning Instruction

### Developing a Plan

Planning is key when it comes to ensuring success. Every part of your instruction needs to be purposeful and must work to move students closer to the goal of learning.

- Build a yearly plan of instruction with expected length, key outcomes or learning targets, and summative assessment tasks for each unit. See page 29 for a template.
- Construct unit plans, identifying assessment and instructional opportunities to address the outcomes and learning targets. Plan for whole-class, small-group, and individual needs, and identify the resources needed.
- Estimate the amount of time required for instruction in each unit/lesson. Record the actual time it took, to help plan for the future.

#### Tips for Planning Instruction

- Share ideas and exchange unit plans with other teachers.
- Meet as a school staff to review yearly plans within each curriculum area and across multiple grade levels.

#### IDEA PLANNING

How and what you teach depends on students' prior knowledge and current level of skill.

Instruction Focus	Prior Knowledge/Skill	Student Needs
Introduce (awareness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• new skill/concept; minimal prior knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• introduction to skill/concept; models</li> </ul>
Develop (exploration in a controlled and supported context)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• familiar concept; skill or understanding at beginning stage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunities for guided, then independent practice; descriptive feedback</li> </ul>
Extend (independent use and application in familiar situations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• good basic understanding or skill level; deepening understanding/proficiency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunities for independent practice, exploration of new contexts; support for self-assessment</li> </ul>
Apply (independent use and application in new situations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• full understanding or skill level; self-assesses strengths, needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunities for further exploration in new contexts</li> </ul>

Working through the beginning, middle, and end of a lesson, you will often find you are using a familiar pattern of moving from whole-class work, to individual and small-group work, back to sharing and reflecting with the whole class.

#### *WHOLE-CLASS DIRECTION AND INSTRUCTION*

- review the focus of the lesson
- record learning targets: be specific, refer to familiar models or anchor charts, and use student-friendly language
- post the agenda/sequence/tasks for the lesson; include options for those who finish early
- activate prior knowledge in anticipation of whole-class instruction
- model and provide explicit instruction that is relevant for all students

#### *INDEPENDENT PRACTICE AND SMALL-GROUP INSTRUCTION*

- review independent tasks
- monitor students as they work on skills that have been taught
- record observations or have conversations with students about their learning
- provide descriptive and specific feedback to individuals and groups about areas of strength and need

#### *INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP REFLECTION AND SHARING*

- provide a method and focus for individual or group reflection
- invite students to share their learning and/or lingering questions with partners, small groups, or the whole class
- provide descriptive and specific feedback to the group about areas of strength and need relevant to both the learning environment and the learning.

#### ***Tips for Effective Use of Time***

- Try to schedule longer or double periods to eliminate wasting time as students change classes.
- Begin instruction immediately and continue until the end of the period.
- Plan each lesson so there is opportunity for students to briefly get up and move, or shift their focus, at least every 20 minutes.
- Stick a magnetic timer to the whiteboard or download an online timer and project it on the wall. Use when you want students to work for a specific period of time.