Design Question: What will I do to establish and maintain classroom rules and procedures?

4. What do I typically do to establish and maintain classroom rules and procedures?

The teacher reviews expectations regarding rules and procedures to ensure their effective execution.

**Teacher Evidence**
- Teacher involves students in designing classroom routines.
- Teacher uses classroom meetings to review and process rules and procedures.
- Teacher reminds students of rules and procedures.
- Teacher asks students to restate or explain rules and procedures.
- Teacher provides cues or signals when a rule or procedure should be used.

**Student Evidence**
- Students follow clear routines during class.
- When asked, students can describe established rules and procedures.
- When asked, students describe the classroom as an orderly place.
- Students recognize cues and signals from the teacher.
- Students regulate their own behavior.

How Am I Doing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establishing and maintaining classroom rules and procedures</th>
<th>4 Innovating</th>
<th>3 Applying</th>
<th>2 Developing</th>
<th>1 Beginning</th>
<th>0 Not Using</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I adapt and create new strategies for unique student needs and situations.</td>
<td>I establish and review expectations regarding rules and procedures, and I monitor the extent to which students understand the rules and procedures.</td>
<td>I establish and review expectations regarding rules and procedures, but I do so in a somewhat mechanistic way.</td>
<td>I use the strategy incorrectly or with parts missing.</td>
<td>I should use the strategy, but I don’t.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Element 4: What do I typically do to establish and maintain classroom rules and procedures?

**Strategies**

**Using a small set of rules and procedures**

The teacher maintains rules and procedures by limiting these to only five to eight per class. The teacher can construct these rules and procedures around any of the following areas:

- General classroom behavior
- Beginning and ending the period or school day
- Transitions and potential interruptions
- Group work
- Seat work and teacher-led activities
- Use of common materials, supplies, and equipment

**Explaining rules and procedures to students**

At the beginning of the school year or term, the teacher discusses the need for rules and procedures with students, presents a set of teacher-designed rules, and explains the logic behind the presented rules. The teacher and students might make rules more explicit by creating procedures (how-to steps) for them.

**Modifying rules and procedures with students**

The teacher invites students to modify existing rules and procedures by suggesting changes. In small groups, students create a list of modified rules. The teacher lists the groups' suggestions on the board and leads the class in a discussion of them. Finally, students vote on each suggestion. Those that gain consensus are then applied to the original set of rules and procedures.

**Generating rules and procedures with students**

After a whole-class discussion about the need for rules and procedures, the teacher asks students to form small groups and create initial lists of suggestions for rules (the teacher might display class rules from previous years to facilitate the process). The teacher then aggregates the lists into one set of rules, which the class discusses. Then they vote on each rule. The teacher adds the rules that obtain a consensus to the class's final list of rules. In a subsequent discussion, students might design procedures for rules that need further clarification.

**Language of responsibility and statements of school beliefs**

The teacher leads a discussion about concepts like freedom, equality, responsibility, threats, opinions, and rights. Students can then create written statements of their beliefs about their rights and responsibilities at school. The class might also discuss real-life situations that require rules and procedures.
Posting rules around the room

The teacher posts rules near relevant locations. For example, he or she might post group-work rules and procedures near group-work spaces, rules for leaving the classroom by the door, and rules for the use of equipment and supplies near storage areas.

Class pledge or classroom constitution

Students write a class pledge or constitution based on the classroom rules and procedures. This document describes what the ideal classroom looks like and what behaviors are necessary to achieve that ideal. All students sign the final copy, and the teacher displays it in the classroom.

Posters and graphics

Students create posters and graphics that emphasize the importance of specific rules and procedures or specific character traits important to proper classroom functioning (integrity, emotional control, and so on).

Gestures and symbols

The teacher and students collaborate to establish gestures or symbols that communicate basic messages in the classroom. For example, a raised hand might indicate a need for quiet or attention, turning the lights off and on could signal that group work has become too noisy, a raised book or pencil could show that a student needs help from the teacher, and words or phrases such as groups might be used to send students to preassigned work areas or groups.

Vignettes and role-playing

Students write vignettes or role-play situations in which the classroom rules apply. Students should model what appropriate behavior looks and sounds like.

Reviewing rules and procedures with students

If students seem to systematically violate or ignore rules and procedures, the teacher calls the lapse to students’ attention and asks for suggestions about how to get behavior back on track. Students might work with the teacher to design a procedure to make a rule more explicit, suspend a rule for a period of time, or drop a rule entirely.

Classroom meetings

Teachers and students designate time to discuss classroom issues. Classroom meetings should be governed by a set of guidelines. For example:

- Classroom meetings will be held for ten minutes at the end of class every other Friday.
- Students and the teacher will sit so that everyone can see everyone else’s face.
- Students and the teacher will avoid using people’s names to emphasize a focus on issues.

Issues for discussion might be raised verbally or submitted ahead of time using a suggestion box.
Student self-assessment

The teacher periodically asks students to assess their own level of adherence to classroom rules and procedures. Students might use a list of the classroom rules and procedures and rate themselves on a scale from 1 (not adhering very well) to 4 (exemplary adherence) for each rule or procedure.

Technology Links

- Use technology to post procedures (such as warm-ups or agendas) for the day or to post rule reminders. Including reminders at the beginning of a presentation allows the teacher and students to review, modify, update, or highlight rules and procedures.

- Post rules and procedures on the class website, blog, or wiki so that parents and students can access them easily.

- As new technology equipment is added to the classroom, work with students to establish rules and procedures for its use. For example, rules for laptop use might state when lids need to be partially closed so students can focus on other things in the classroom.
Design Question 6
What Will I Do to Establish or Maintain Classroom Rules and Procedures?

Module 17

Establishing and Maintaining Classroom Rules and Procedures

This module continues to explore Design Question 6: What will I do to establish or maintain classroom rules and procedures? Classroom rules and procedures are fundamental and essential to building a productive learning community within the classroom. An essential goal for teachers should be to promote student understanding and ownership of the rules and procedures necessary to maximize learning. In addition, students should be encouraged to periodically revisit classroom operating principles, providing input about how those principles might be changed and how the class as a whole might improve their attention to classroom rules and procedures.

We suggest that teachers minimize the number of rules and procedures to ensure student understanding, adherence, and buy-in. Teachers should begin by establishing general classroom rules and then work toward procedures for more specific areas such as the beginning and end of the school day or period, transitions, and the efficient use of materials and equipment. The following generalizations should guide the design and implementation of classroom rules and procedures:

- Although rules and procedures should be established at the beginning of the school year, students need reminders of when rules and procedures must be added or altered.
- Rules establish general expectations or standards regarding student behavior.
- Procedures describe those behaviors that will help students realize the rules.
The utility of rules and procedures is enhanced if students have input into their design, especially if the teacher facilitates periodic discussions via classroom meetings.

Reflecting on Your Current Beliefs and Practices

Before examining the strategies in this module, take some time to examine your current beliefs and practices by answering the following questions:

1. In your opinion, what is the relationship between student achievement and the type and quality of interactions with students about classroom rules and procedures?

2. To what extent do you use specific strategies to ensure that students adhere to rules and procedures?

3. How do you make certain that all students understand their rights and responsibilities?

4. To what extent do you periodically review with students key classroom rules and procedures?

5. How do you use classroom meetings to promote students’ understanding of and adherence to rules and procedures?
Recommendations for Classroom Practice

This module addresses the following strategies for Design Question 6:

- Establishing a small set of rules and procedures
- Interacting with students about classroom rules and procedures
- Periodically reviewing rules and procedures and making changes as necessary
- Using classroom meetings to design and maintain rules and procedures

Establishing a Small Set of Rules and Procedures

There are a number of areas for which a teacher might establish rules and procedures. One of them is general classroom behavior. Figure 17.1 depicts sample rules in this area.

---

**FIGURE 17.1**

**Sample Rules for General Behavior**

**Classroom Rules (1st Grade)**
1. Be safe.
2. Be kind.
3. Be polite.

**Classroom Rules (2nd Grade)**
1. Listen carefully.
2. Follow directions.
3. Work quietly. Do not disturb others who are working.
4. Respect others. Be kind with your words and actions.
5. Respect school and personal property.

**Classroom Rules (3rd Grade)**
1. Be kind and respectful to others and yourself.
2. Listen when others are speaking.
3. Use your manners and be safe.
4. Keep your hands and mean words to yourself.
5. Have fun.

**Rules for Classroom Behavior (Secondary)**
1. Respect one another at all times.
2. Maintain eye contact when communicating with others or when someone—a teacher or a classmate—is speaking.
Transitions and potential interruptions frequently require explicit rules and procedures. As an illustration, Figure 17.3 provides an example of rules for use of the bathroom.

**FIGURE 17.3**

**Sample Rules for Use of the Bathroom**

1. No talking in the bathroom.
2. You have only three minutes of bathroom time.
3. Do your job and don't mess around.
4. Go to the bathroom only during group bathroom breaks, recess, or independent work time.

We promise to follow the bathroom rules. (Each student in the class signs the rules sheet.)


Group work is commonly the subject of rules and procedures. Figure 17.4 provides some examples.

**FIGURE 17.4**

**Sample Rules for Group Work**

1. Take turns talking quietly.
2. Listen to each other's ideas.
3. Praise each other's ideas.
4. Help each other when asked.
5. Stay together until everyone is finished.
6. Talk about how you worked well together and how you might improve.


Seat work and teacher-led activities are other topics for which rules and procedures are frequently established. Figure 17.5 provides some examples.
FIGURE 17.5
Sample Rules for Seat Work

1. You may talk quietly with a classmate if you have a question.
2. If you need further help, raise your hand and the teacher will come to your desk.
3. When you complete the assignment, start one of the enrichment activities posted on the board.


Finally, use of common materials and supplies is also a subject for rules and procedures. Figure 17.6 provides some examples.

FIGURE 17.6
Sample Rules for Common Materials and Supplies

Be Prepared Every Day
1. Bring a pencil or pen to class.
2. Bring a spiral notebook for note taking and other work.
3. Bring your textbook to class each day.
4. If you forget your materials, remember the Borrowing Rules we set:
   • Try to borrow what you need from a classmate. OR . . .
   • You may borrow up to five times from the community shelf.
   • Put a checkmark next to your name each time you borrow something.
   • Don’t forget to return what you have borrowed at the end of class.


The examples in Figures 17.1 to 17.6 are rules—general statements of expectations. A teacher might find that for some of these rules explicit procedures must be developed.

A procedure describes the specific actions a student must take to follow the rule. To illustrate, consider Figure 17.7, which illustrates a procedure for beginning the school day in an elementary classroom. Providing students with steps like those in Figure 17.7 gives them clear guidance (i.e., a clear procedure) regarding how each day will begin.

Obviously it would be counterproductive to establish procedures for every classroom rule. Consequently, it is important to identify a small set of rules and then develop procedures only for those rules for which students need specific guidelines regarding how
FIGURE 17.7
Sample Procedure for Beginning the Day

1. I will greet each student individually at the door.
2. You should read silently for a short time while I quickly take attendance. Then I will stop by each student's desk to provide feedback about individual behavior or academic performance.
3. As a class, we will stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance and then listen to a recording of "God Bless America."

Examples

*Fourth Grade Classroom.* This newly hired teacher is extremely diligent about trying to make certain that her classroom is orderly and controlled. However, in her zeal to maintain a safe and orderly learning environment, she presents her students with so many rules and procedures that they appear overwhelmed by the list—and choose to ignore many of them because of their lack of understanding and buy-in. After discussing this problem with her mentor, the teacher decides to conduct a town meeting with her students. She revisits with them the importance of rules and procedures, as well as the significance of their assuming responsibility for how the classroom operates. At the conclusion of their discussion, the group identifies five key rules that everyone agrees are essential to maintain order, safety, and collaboration. She regularly revisits these five rules with students. As a result, her classroom becomes much more collaborative and productive, with all students "owning" the more limited list of rules. She also finds that procedures must be developed for a few of the less obvious rules.

*University Preservice Teacher Training Program.* This program is designed to prepare student teachers to work in urban schools with highly transient student populations. To prepare participants for their student teaching experience, professors all agree to reinforce two key tenets of effective classroom management: (1) the need to have students understand and contribute to the implementation of the rules and procedures for which they are responsible, and (2) the need to limit rules and procedures to a manageable number. Previously, many student teachers had become frustrated trying to get their students to follow a long list of rules for which the students refused to assume ownership. With this new approach, program participants find that students seem more aware of their individual role in sustaining a safe, orderly, and inviting classroom. Students also seem to benefit from their participation in the decision-making process. Their greater level of responsibility
ensures that they are active—rather than passive—members of the classroom as a vibrant learning community.

**Activity Box**

Which rules and procedures that you currently have might be replaced? Which rules and procedures should you definitely keep? Why?

---

**Interacting with Students About Classroom Rules and Procedures**

When designing rules and procedures, it is important to interact with students about them. This is best done at the very beginning of the school year. Interaction about rules and procedures might be as simple as explaining each rule and procedure to students. This would involve discussing their logic and their importance.

Another approach is to present students with rules and procedures but then invite them to modify those rules and procedures. Students might be organized in small groups and asked to suggest changes. Each group's suggestions would be listed on the board, and all would be discussed by the entire class. Those suggested changes that gain consensus would be applied to the original set of rules and procedures.

At an even higher level of student involvement, the students can generate rules and procedures. In this scenario the teacher shifts responsibility for crafting rules and procedures to the entire class. The interaction usually begins with a whole-class discussion regarding the need for rules and procedures. Again, students are organized into small groups, each of which is charged with identifying an initial list. During a whole-class discussion, the students and teacher aggregate the list into one unified set. These are voted on by the class to obtain a consensus list. In subsequent discussions, procedures for those rules that are not obvious are designed by the class. This approach obviously takes more time but has the potential of maximizing student ownership of the class rules and procedures.

**Examples**

*Seventh Grade Technology Education.* A recurring problem in this classroom is students' perception that the workstations are difficult to access, resulting in their belief that resources are not equitably distributed. Because students are required to complete a minimum of six independent projects during the semester, the teacher decides to enlist student
help in resolving the situation. At the beginning of the week, he announces that students will form small groups to develop a collaborative timeline with completion benchmarks for each project. He shows them models and examples from previous academic years and allows them time to discuss the most viable ways for everyone to complete required tasks. They also explore the issue of limited workspace and the need to respect one another's time lines and individual needs. Once the small-group discussions are completed, each group presents its proposal. Finally, the class uses their small-group work to create a consensus-driven work plan that becomes the basis for making the workspace more efficient and productive. After the plan is implemented, the teacher sees a remarkable positive change in classroom climate and rates of project completion as well as decreased levels of tension and conflict.

*High School Civics.* This teacher uses the issue of classroom rules and procedures as a catalyst for reinforcing students' understanding of the role of law in social settings. She begins each year by having students develop a class constitution, articulating a limited number of clear, consensus-driven rules for whole-group, small-group, and independent work. Students are then asked to revisit their constitution on a monthly basis, examining how they are individually contributing to the operation of this microsociety and helping to amend the constitution as situations warrant changes. At appropriate times during the semester, the teacher also asks students to compare the operation of their class to the functions and processes of state and federal governments. By using this sustained analogy, the instructor reinforces key ideas and understandings related to social networking, rule of law, individual and group responsibility for social welfare, and consequences for citizens' failure to follow social norms, standards, and laws. Classroom management and collective responsibility become an integral part of the curriculum and day-to-day operations rather than being artificially separated from them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Box</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How have you involved students in the design of rules and procedures? How might you involve them further?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Periodically Reviewing Rules and Procedures and Making Changes as Necessary**

Periodic review of rules and procedures can prove extraordinarily useful in promoting students' ownership of their behavior. For example, impromptu class discussions—especially when on-the-spot situations warrant them—can be used to engage students in revisiting
rules and procedures. Review is necessary when students seem to be systematically violating or ignoring rules and procedures. Rather than trying to remedy the situation by enforcing some type of negative consequence, the teacher calls the lapse in behavior to the attention of the students and asks for their suggestions as to how to get behavior back on track. This might lead to a reevaluation of the rule or a clarification of the behaviors that constitute following the rule. In some cases, a procedure might have to be designed so that all students know exactly what is expected of them.

In other situations, rules and procedures might be suspended or completely dropped, based on input from students. For example, students might view the rule of raising their hands before speaking out as overly restrictive. Based on this input from students, the teacher might suspend the rule to see how well this new protocol works in fostering more engaging classroom discussions. If the suspension of the rule does not produce the desired result, the rule can be reinstated.

Examples

Second Grade Art. This elementary teacher is dedicated to ensuring that her students have regular experiences involving the visual arts, including drawing, painting, sculpture, and other visual displays. She also helps them see cross-disciplinary connections by having students create nonlinguistic representations of key concepts and ideas. However, distributing materials can be challenging with young students, particularly when it comes to sharing supplies and space for larger art projects. So she makes certain that the class regularly revisits key rules and procedures before distributing art supplies. She also discusses with students how rules and procedures can be altered to make the class run more effectively. “How can we share our classroom supplies and space more effectively so that we all work well together? What rules should we change or delete to help everyone work more effectively?” As a result of these discussions, students grow in their ability to assume responsibility for rules and procedures. Throughout the year, students’ experiences with art also complement their understanding of other content areas as well their capacity for self-regulation and self-monitoring within a community of learners.

Middle School Chorus. This chorus teacher understands that collaboration and mutual support are critical to the success of both in-class and schoolwide choral performances. In addition to stressing key elements of vocal technique and musical blending, she begins every unit with a brief class discussion of what works—and what doesn’t work—in preparing for choral presentations. This process becomes a regular part of students’ critique of their individual and collective performances. It also helps students perceive chorus as a training ground for collaborating in all types of group processes. When problems emerge with particular musical arrangements or preparations, the teacher takes time to conduct on-the-spot discussions of how rules and procedures might be modified. She also conducts individual and small-group coaching sessions to help students understand key rules and procedures and improve their contributions to the group’s success.
Activity Box

Describe a time when you changed a rule or procedure that you had previously established. How did students respond to this change?

Using Classroom Meetings to Design and Maintain Rules and Procedures

To formalize the review of rules and procedures we advise scheduling regular classroom meetings for 10 minutes at the beginning of a class (e.g., every Friday). This “town meeting” approach reinforces the notion that the management of the classroom is the responsibility of students and within their control. In these meetings, the teacher and students bring up relevant issues. If students do not feel comfortable voicing issues in front of the entire class, the teacher might use a suggestion box or might institute a policy whereby students can approach her individually and then she will anonymously bring up the student’s issue at the class meeting.

Examples

Chemistry. This chemistry class is taught by a highly experienced teacher who begins his Friday classes with a collaborative debriefing on what is working and what needs to be improved in such areas as materials distribution, student interactions, and safety in the chemistry lab. These town meetings also help the teacher reinforce the habits of mind and professional protocols used by chemists in their professional settings. In effect, the town meetings become a structured and predictable venue to reinforce rules and procedures within the context of purposeful and authentic work. As students progress through the year under the teacher’s guidance and coaching, these meetings help them observe changes in their own levels of independence. Chemistry becomes a class in which their capacity for self-management and responsibility is celebrated.

Interdisciplinary English–Social Studies High School Unit. Under the leadership of a new principal, teachers in the English and social studies departments at this high school have been encouraged to explore potential cross-disciplinary connections with their students. This principal wants students to understand how key themes and ideas interrelate and why these ideas are important. Teachers form cross-disciplinary pairs and design a series of project-based assessment tasks that require students to integrate key skills and habits of mind for language arts and social studies. At the beginning of each unit
and at weekly town meetings, students revisit with both instructors key time line-driven benchmarks, protocols for independent work and media center research, and underlying rules and procedures for cooperative learning cadres. As students progress through the academic year, they become increasingly responsible for managing deadlines. The weekly town meetings also provide a context for celebrating successes in this area and for addressing and resolving emergent logistical issues.

Activity Box

How have you used classroom meetings in the past? If you haven’t, how might you use them in the future?

Checking for Understanding

Use the following rating scale to assess your current understanding and comfort level regarding the strategies and processes presented in this module:

4 = I understand and already fully implement this strategy in my classroom.
3 = I understand this strategy, but I need to practice using it in my classroom.
2 = I can explain this strategy, but I am not fully confident that I can use it.
1 = I do not understand this strategy, and I do not currently use it in my classroom.

1. Establishing a small set of rules and procedures

*Based on my rating, I may need to revisit the following:*
2. Interacting with students about classroom rules and procedures
   Based on my rating, I may need to revisit the following:

3. Periodically reviewing rules and procedures and making changes as necessary
   Based on my rating, I may need to revisit the following:

4. Using classroom meetings
   Based on my rating, I may need to revisit the following: