

Book Study

Prepared by the
Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) Project

The Teacher's Pocket Guide for Effective Classroom Management

Tim Knoster
Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company, 2008

Book Description: *This concise and conversational guide introduces its readers to the foundations of effective classroom management – rapport, expectations, reinforcement. Its message is applicable to educators at the primary and secondary level while providing valuable and practical information. The author's writing style easily allows the text to be a quick-read.*

Target Audience:

- **Structuring Teams**
- **Implementing Teams**
- **Behavior**
- **General Staff**
- **Empowering Culture**
- **Elementary Team**
- **Secondary Team**

The contents of this resource were developed under an agreement from the Federal Department of Education to the Kansas State Department of Education. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Kansas State Department of Education or the Federal Government should not be assumed. Kansas MTSS is funded through Part B funds administered by the Kansas State Department of Education's Early Childhood, Special Education and Title Services. Keystone Learning Services does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in this program and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Keystone Learning Services Executive Director, 500 E. Sunflower Blvd, Ozawie, KS 66070, 785-876- 2214.

Chapter 1: So Why Should I Read This Book?

Brief Overview: This chapter establishes the rationale for the book and explains the layout of the chapters. Readers learn the author has chosen to write the text in a conversational tone so citations are missing throughout the text. However, the research base for the content of the book is provided at the end under the heading, “References and Resources for Further Reading.”

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify the shared mission all educators collectively work toward as described by the author.
2. What do you think the author means when he says, “It is unlikely that you will find any one aspect of preventative practice highlighted to be, in and of itself, a panacea, silver bullet, or Holy Grail in terms of classroom management”?
3. In this chapter, the author states that a teacher’s job is to help students develop both academically and behaviorally. Do you agree with this position? Why or Why not?

Chapter 2: So Why Do Kids Act the Way They Do?

Brief Overview: This chapter acknowledges the age-old debate of nature versus nurture as the reason students and adults act the way they do. It introduces the concept that all behaviors engaged in by both students and adults serve a purpose to help the individual meet an unmet need. These behaviors can be context related or situational.

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify the key to understanding or decoding student behavior.
2. With the concept of understanding student behavior, compare and contrast students in your class that are able to handle things well versus those that cannot.
3. Evaluate the statement, “Acknowledge the existence of what you cannot control (nature, pathology) while at the same time investing your time and energy on the things you can influence (your classroom environment).”
4. Which one of your behaviors probably drives students crazy? Why?
5. Explain why understanding the nature of behavior and importance of context is necessary for students to experience academic and behavioral success.

Chapter 3: So How Do I Prevent Problem Behavior in My Classroom?

Brief Overview: This chapter explores the steps educators must take to enhance the learning environment in a way that will dramatically reduce the likelihood of nuisance and problem behaviors.

Discussion Questions:

1. Define the primary emphasis in effective classroom management.
2. Apply the phrase, “You catch more bees with honey than vinegar” to classroom management.
3. Compare and contrast between nuisance behaviors and problem behaviors.
4. Evaluate the three principles of practice and how they affect your classroom.
 - a. Rapport
 - b. Clear expectations
 - c. Reinforcement of expected behavior
5. What is the role of instruction in helping students reach acceptable levels of behavior?

Chapter 4: So How Close Should I Get with My Students?

Brief Overview: This chapter discusses the principle of having a positive rapport with all students in relation to student achievement and classroom management. Steps to establish rapport are also provided.

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify three examples of how a teacher could build rapport with a student.
2. Which of the steps in building rapport as detailed in Table 4.1 do you anticipate being a challenge for you? Why?
3. Apply the phrase, “. . . tilling the (classroom) soil” to student rapport.
4. Think back to your days in high school/middle school/elementary school. Evaluate and compare two of your past teachers in regards to student rapport and how much you felt you learned in that class.

Chapter 5: So How Do I Go About Establishing Expectations in My Classroom?

Brief Overview: This chapter examines the principle of clear expectations. The fundamental aspects of establishing clear behavioral expectations in the classroom are introduced to the reader. In addition, “the dead man test” is explained and can be utilized to evaluate broad behavioral expectations.

Discussion Questions:

1. Which of the fundamental aspects of establishing clear behavioral expectations in the classroom as outlined in Table 5.2 do you currently employ? For those aspects not currently used, discuss the benefits of their implementation.
2. Review your current classroom rules and use them as the basis for developing and documenting 3-5 positively stated behavioral expectations.
3. Discuss why it is important to provide reinforcement to students when they exhibit desired behaviors.
4. Explain the “dead man’s test” and why it should be applied to classroom rules.

Chapter 6: So How Hard Is It to Use Reinforcement in My Classroom?

Brief Overview: This chapter examines the principle of reinforcement of expected behavior. What one student finds reinforcing may not be reinforcing to another student. This idea is critical when examining positive and negative reinforcement. The issue of “fairness” is addressed as the author discusses differentiating reinforcement procedures between students. Readers are provided practical yet research validated application ideas throughout the narrative to support the use of reinforcement in the classroom.

Discussion Questions:

1. Describe the difference between positive and negative reinforcement.
2. Do you support or are you in disagreement with the author’s position regarding fairness as described on page 49? Why?
3. Explain the “Premack Principle.”
4. Clarify the role reinforcement plays in the “three-legged stool” analogy provided by the author.
5. Review the common approaches to identifying reinforcers found in Table 6.2. Share your experiences with any of these reinforcers and what you would do differently to improve the approach. If you haven’t had experience with one of the described approaches, which will be the easiest and hardest for you to implement? Why?

Chapter 7: So Does It Really Boil Down to Classroom Climate?

Brief Overview: This chapter addresses the impact implementing the three principles of practice to classroom management – rapport, expectations, and reinforcement has on the overall classroom climate. When students perceive that teachers care about them and meet their needs, students will have higher levels of academic and behavioral achievement.

Discussion Questions:

1. The author implies that data and student's perception (a gut sense) are both valuable in judging the climate of a classroom. Provide an argument to either support or refute this belief.
2. Knowing there is a direct relationship between classroom climate and student levels of academic and behavioral achievement, describe the classroom of a colleague who has established a positive classroom climate in terms of what you see, hear, and feel upon entering the classroom.
3. What are the benefits of a healthy and positive classroom climate for students? What are the benefits for the teacher?

Chapter 8: So What Else Can I Do?

Brief Overview: For the student that requires more support, this chapter recommends providing a student-centered intervention in tandem with the continued practices of rapport, expectations, and reinforcement.

Discussion Questions:

1. List and describe the continuum levels of student-centered interventions.
2. Develop and share with your team a plan for how you are going to handle nuisance behaviors.
3. Describe the use of a behavior contract as indicated by the author. What experiences have you had with behavior contracts?
4. What is an FBA? Describe the FBA process.
5. How will the logical "W" questions outlined in Table 8.4 help address problem behavior?

Chapter 9: So How Do I Connect the Dots?

Brief Overview: This chapter reminds the reader that a positive classroom climate conducive for learning takes proper preparation and intentional focus on behalf of the teacher. The teacher must establish rapport, clearly define behavioral expectations, and reinforce students exhibiting desirable behavior.

Discussion Questions:

1. Thinking of a staff member that is good at establishing rapport with students, describe why you believe this is the case.
2. Thinking beyond your classroom, are there 3-5 behavioral expectations common for the entire school? If so, what are they & what relationship do they have on your individual classroom expectations and rules? If your school does not currently have 3-5 behavior expectations common for the entire school, what are the benefits of establishing and teaching them to students and staff?
3. Evaluate your effective use of reinforcement procedures. What are you doing well and in what ways can you continue to improve?