Effective Management and Discipline:

A Coordinated Approach

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Managing student behavior is not easy. A class of children is a group of individuals, each requiring unique treatment and understanding. Some teachers question the importance of effective management and discipline. The most basic reason for management and discipline is to help children learn effectively without infringing on other children’s rights. Children can enjoy freedom as long as their behavior is consistent with educational expectations and does not prevent other students from learning.

The effective management of behavior means maintaining an environment in which all children have the opportunity to learn. Students who choose to be disruptive and off task compromise the rights of students who choose to cooperate. Typically, most students cooperate with the teacher. When a teacher has to spend a great deal of time working with children who are disorderly, students who want to learn are short-changed. Thus, an efficient approach is to minimize disruptions that are distractions from learning

A smoothly functioning class is a joy to watch. Teachers behave in ways that promote positive student behavior, and students perform in a positive, caring way. Management and discipline techniques are interrelated; one affects the other. *M*anagement is defined as “organizing and controlling the affairs of a class.” It refers to how students are organized, started and stopped, grouped, and arranged during class. Effective management means that students are moved quickly, called by their names, moved into instructional formations, taught using efficient bouts of instruction, and so on. Discipline is defined as “modifying student behavior when it is unacceptable.” When things do not go smoothly, and some students decide not to follow the teacher’s management requests, these behaviors must be addressed. Discipline techniques are required to create a constructive teaching environment and to shape behavior.

When working with children in any environment, discipline problems will occur. Thus, it is essential that successful teachers have strategies and skills necessary to address these issues in an appropriate and productive manner. Teachers can apply the following strategies to develop a well-managed and disciplined class:

1. Use proper teaching behaviors.

2. Define class procedures, rules, and consequences.

3. Incorporate efficient management skills.

4. Teach acceptable student behavior.

5. Use behavior management to increase acceptable behavior.

6. Decrease unacceptable behavior with discipline.

Use Proper Teaching Behaviors

In a well-managed class, teacher and students assume dual responsibility for learning. The presentations and instructional strategies used should be appropriate for the capabilities of the students and the nature of the activity sequences. It is important to remember thatbehavior issues may be a result of teaching behaviors and are not always derived from unacceptable choices by students. For example, unclear instructions may result in what is perceived by the teacher as off-task behavior. A quick reflection by the teacher may reveal the students are not off task, but rather confused by the directions.

Teachers who put time into thinking about what they are going to teach and how they are going to teach based on the class and students tend to have more success. Just as efficient instructors plan for their content, they also plan for their management, putting much thought into how the lesson will be implemented and how potential behaviour issues will be addressed. When a skillful instructor prevents problems before they occur, less time is spent dealing with deviant behavior. Your behavior influences students. How students learn and behave reflects your personality, outlook, ideals, and background. Recognize your personal habits and attitudes that affect students negatively. Unsure of your habits? Videotape yourself teaching. While initially uncomfortable for some, this practice will shed light on to your mannerisms and attitudes. Try to model the behavior you desire from students. This means hustling if you demand that students hustle. It means using “please” and “thank you” frequently if you value politeness. It means listening carefully to students or performing fitness activities from time to time. Modeling acceptable behavior strongly affects students. Your actions speak louder than your words.

Develop an Assertive Communication Style

It is important to hear how you speak to students. Recording class sessions will help you identify the approach you take when interacting with students. Your communication style is often revealed when you are under pressure or unsure of yourself. At that point, teachers who are not assertive may become aggressive or passive in trying to get students “back in line.” Generally, a teacher communicates in three ways when dealing with management and discipline scenarios. Each style is discussed in detail here, the goal being for teachers to learn to develop and use an assertive style of communication when dealing with management and discipline issues.

Passive Communicator

To avoid becoming upset at students, a passive teacher “hopes” to make all children happy. Passive means “trying to avoid all conflict and pleasing others.” Directly or indirectly, the passive teacher is constantly thinking, “Like me, appreciate what I do for you.” Many passive teachers want to be perfect so everybody will like them and their students will behave perfectly.

Passive teachers often relinquish their power to students, particularly the least cooperative students. They will say things like, “We are not going to start until everyone is listening!” Some students may interpret that to mean, “Terrific. We don’t have to start until we are finished with our conversation.” Passive teachers also ignore unacceptable behavior and hope it will disappear. Ignoring seldom causes behavior to disappear; rather, it becomes worse over time. Passive teachers often say things but never follow through. For example, “If you do that one more time, I am going to call your parents.” When there is no follow-through or it is impossible to follow through, the threats become meaningless, and students soon learn disrespect for the teacher. Passive teachers, moreover, typically ask questions that result in useless information, such as “What did you do that for?” or “Why are you doing this?” or “Don’t you know better than that?” When students respond with “I don’t know,” it’s common for the teacher to become frustrated and angry.

Adopting a passive style of communication can also result in frustration and lashing out. When students go off task, a passive teacher can become upset and angry. That is because the passive teacher typically lets behavior slide until “he can’t take it anymore.” Then he loses composure and shouts at the class in anger. When the anger subsides, the passive teacher wants to make up and again starts the cycle of letting things go and trying to be liked. This cycle is frequently repeated. Thus, in some situations, a passive communicator can momentarily change into an aggressive communicator.

Aggressive Communicator

An aggressive teacher wants to intimidate students by coming on strong. Aggressive people feel that discussions are a form of competition that they must win at all costs. A common trait of aggressive communicators is that they use the word “You” all the time. These statements keep students feeling defensive and attacked: “You never listen to me; you are always in trouble; you are the problem here; you are always talking.” Aggressive responders often think they have all the answers and try to express others’ viewpoints. They may say to a student, “You think that because you did that last year in Mr. Jones’s class, you can do it in my class.” No one knows what another person is thinking, and it serves no purpose to communicate this way.

Aggressive teachers often use the words “always” and “never.” These are labeling words. They make students feel as if they are bad people who always behave in certain ways or never do anything right. Words that generalize and label create problems in communication and often result in alienation rather than respect for a teacher. Aggressive teachers often see students as personally attacking them and focus on labeling and putting down the student rather than dealing with the behavior. Typically, they do not reveal how they feel and are unwilling to express their thoughts. If students never know how a teacher feels, they will likely develop little empathy for them. Keep in mind that any statement about a student other than your own feelings or thoughts will give your communication an aggressive quality.

Assertive Communicator

An assertive teacher does not beg, plead, or threaten. Rather, he or she expresses feelings and expectations straightforwardly. Assertive people are not afraid to say what they want and do not worry about what others think of them. Teachers who want to be liked are quite concerned about what their students think. An assertive teacher wants what is best for students and does not worry about what they think. Assertiveness comes across to students as a no-nonsense approach that needs to be followed. The approach is clear, direct, and concrete (requiring little interpretation by students). For example, an assertive teacher might say to a student talking out of turn, “It upsets me when you talk while I am talking.” This teacher is expressing feelings and making it clear what the unacceptable behavior is. The teacher can then follow that statement with an assertive statement that expresses the acceptable behavior: “That is your second warning; please go to time-out.” Assertive communication emphasizes clarity without anger. Assertive responding does not involve high emotion, which turns assertion into aggressiveness.

One way to make messages more assertive is to use “I” instead of “you.” Talking about your own feelings and emotions makes the messages sound much more reasonable and firm: “When you are playing with equipment while I am talking, it bothers me and makes me forget what I planned on saying. Please leave your equipment alone when I talk.” Such messages identify the disrupting or annoying behavior, offer how you feel, and direct the student to behave properly.

Create a Personal Behavior Plan

A key element of an effective management approach is to understand and plan for how you will behave when disciplining students. Serious misbehavior can cause some teachers to become angry, others to feel threatened, and others to behave tyrannically. Personal behavior plans usually include these points:

1. Maintain composure. Students do not know your “hot buttons” unless you reveal them. If you “lose it,” students lose respect for you and believe you are an ineffective teacher.

2. Acknowledge your feelings when student misbehavior occurs. Do you feel angry, threatened, challenged, or fearful? How do you typically respond when a student defies you?

3. Design a plan for yourself when such feelings occur. For example, provide positive feedback to a nearby student immediately, or take a deep breath. Avoid dealing with a student’s misbehavior until you know how you feel and have created a plan.

4. Know the options you have for dealing with the deviant behavior. Talking with students is best done after class if it will take more than a few seconds. When time is limited, some options are to quietly warn the student, quietly remove the student from class, or quietly send another student for help if the situation is severe.

Be a Leader, Not a Friend

Students want a teacher who is knowledgeable, personable, and a leader. They are not looking for a new friend; in fact, most students feel uncomfortable if they think you are trying to be “one of them.” Let students know what they will learn during the semester. Do not try to be a part of their personal discussions. There must be a comfortable distance between you and your students. You can still be friendly and caring; it is important to be empathetic toward students as long as you express concern in a professional way. Being a leader means knowing where and how to direct a class. You are responsible for what is learned and how it is presented. Student input is important, but ultimately, it is your responsibility to lead a class to acceptable objectives.

**Communicate High Standards**

Students respond to your expectations. If you expect students to perform at high levels, most of them will strive to do so. That is, you get what you ask for. If you expect students to perform to the best of their abilities, they likely will do so. On the other hand, if you don’t expect and reinforce quality behavior, some students will do as little as possible. While these standards may fluctuate slightly from lesson to lesson, high expectations should be the norm.

Understand Why Students Misbehave

Students misbehave for various reasons. Understanding these reasons and being able to identify them when the misbehaviors occur will help you anticipate and prevent many behavior problems. Students sometimes misbehave because they did not understand the instructions. Give instructions and then proceed with the activity. If some students are not performing correctly, perhaps they still did not understand. Clarify the instructions and proceed. This two-tiered approach usually ensures that directions are clear and that ample opportunity is given for all to understand.

Typical causes of misbehavior.

• The student may be testing the teacher.

• The student may have some type of learning disability that causes the behavior problem.

• The student may be looking for reinforcement from the teacher.

• The student may have low self-esteem, which causes the student to misbehave while trying to become the center of attention.

• The student may not understand the directions given.

• The student may be bored and unchallenged by the activities.

• Performing the activities may result in continuous failure, so the student misbehaves to avoid revealing a lack of ability.

• Parents may deal with their children in a manner completely unlike the methods used in physical education.

• The teacher may not like the student, thus forcing the student to be combative and angry.

• Failure in other subjects may carry over to physical education.

Privately Deliver Negative and Corrective Feedback

When you deliver negative and corrective feedback, make it private and directed to the particular student for whom it is intended. Few people want to have negative or corrective comments delivered publically for others to hear. Besides, not all students should be punished for the behavior of a few misbehaving classmates. Negative feedback directed to a group can have contrary results. For example, a student may talk back to you in front of other students, which may cause you to lose the respect and admiration of students who were behaving properly.

Avoid Feedback That Offers the Possibility for Backlash

Some verbal types of interactions may work in the short term but have long-term negative consequences. Some types of feedback sometimes work immediately (the behavior stops) but cause greater problems over the long haul. If students become resentful, they tend to be deviant when the teacher is not looking. Some approaches to avoid are:

•Preaching or moralizing. The most common example of moralizing is telling students “you should know better than that!” Students make mistakes because they are young and still learning, and a part of learning is making mistakes. Correct mistakes in a quiet and caring way.

• Threatening. Threats are ultimatums that attempt to terminate unacceptable behavior, even though you know the threat will be impossible to carry out. For example, “If you do not stop that, I’m going to kick you out of class” sounds tough but is usually impossible to enforce. You are not in a position to expel students, and some students know you cannot carry out the threat. If students hear enough idle threats, they will start to tune out, and their respect for you will gradually wane.

• Ordering and commanding. If you are bossy, students begin to think they are nothing more than pawns to be moved around the area. Request that students carry out tasks. Courtesy and politeness are requisites for effective teacher–student relationships.

• Interrogating. When a problem arises (such as a fight between students), an initial reaction is to try and discover who started the fight rather than dealing with the combatants’ feelings. Little is gained by trying to solve “who started it.” Students often shirk the blame and suggest it was not their fault. Try calmly saying, “You know fighting is unacceptable behavior. You must have been very angry to place yourself in this situation.” This encourages students to talk about their feelings rather than place blame. It also communicates a caring and concerned attitude toward children even when they do something wrong.

• Refusing to listen. This approach commonly manifests itself as, “Let’s talk about it some other time.” During instruction, this response may be necessary to keep students focused. But, if you always refuse to listen, students will avoid interacting with you and believe you do not care.

• Labeling. Labeling is characterized by telling children, “Stop acting like babies” or “You’re behaving like a bunch of first-graders.” On an individual level, such feedback might sound like, “You’re always the troublemaker.” Using labels is degrading and dehumanizes children. Teachers often think labeling will improve performance, but it is usually destructive and leaves students with negative feelings, instead.

Define Class Procedures, Rules, and Consequences

Effectively managing is dependent on the teacher’s ability to clearly articulate expectations. Without guidelines and routines, students have to guess what the teacher expects every day. This situation makes students uneasy. Suppose, for example, that students are outdoors for a physical education lesson, and their teacher tells them not to get too far away so they can hear all the directions. Sure enough, some students stray beyond a distance the teacher deems acceptable, and they are disciplined. Unfortunately, the teacher was at fault because he did not set up clear guidelines. How can students judge what is too far away? What if they felt they could hear the directions, but the teacher did not think so? Can the teacher be consistent in applying this rule when even he does not know how far is too far? If he had set up cones around the perimeter of the area and asked students to stay inside them, he could have eliminated the problem entirely. The following steps will minimize misunderstandings and make all parties feel comfortable.

Step One: Determine Management Routines for Students

Children like structure. Students feel best when they know your expectations, and are most comfortable when they have established routines to follow. Explain your routines so that students understand why you are using them. Here are some routines teachers often use:

1. How students are supposed to enter the teaching area.

2. How the teaching area is defined.

3. Where and how they should meet—in sitting squads, moving and freezing on a spot, in a semicircle, and so on.

4. What they should do if equipment is located in the area.

5. What signal is used to “freeze” a class.

6. How they procure and put away equipment.

7. How they will be grouped for instruction.

It is important for teachers to establish routines early in the school year and to review them as needed. For example, if equipment has not been placed around the perimeter of the gymnasium for several weeks, a first grade class may need to be reminded of your expectations before entering the teaching area. After establishing and practicing these class management routines, teachers and students can work together comfortably.

Step Two: Determine Rules and Procedures for the School Year

Rules are an expected part of the school environment. School administrators typically judge teachers’ effectiveness by how well they manage students rather than by how much they know about the subject matter. Teachers want students to show respect—to teachers and to other students. It is reasonable to expect students to behave in an acceptable manner. *If you cannot manage students, you cannot teach them.* When creating your rules, select general categories rather than specific behaviors. For example, “Respect your neighbor” means many things, from not pushing to not swearing at another student. Post rules in the teaching area where all students can easily read them. Some examples of general rules:

• Stop, look, and listen. This involves freezing on signal, looking at the instructor, and listening for instructions.

• Take care of equipment. This includes caring for equipment and distributing, gathering, and using it properly.

• Respect the rights of others. This covers behavior such as not pushing others, leaving others’ equipment alone, not fighting or arguing, and not physically or emotionally hurting others.

It is difficult for students to remember all the details of more than three to five general rules. Too many rules can cause students to become “rule-specific.” A child may choose to chew gum in the multipurpose room because the rule is “No gum-chewing in the halls.” When students become rule-specific, they do not think about right, wrong, and the spirit of the rule; rather, they look for exceptions to the rule. Effective rules are general, positively phrased guidelines to direct acceptable behavior rather than negative statements that tell students what they cannot do. Consider the following points when designing rules:

• Select major categories of behavior rather than a multitude of specific rules. For example, how to behave towards peers or how to treat the teacher.

• Identify observable behavior. This makes it easy to determine whether a student is following a rule and does not involve subjective judgment. “Do your best” is a common rule that is difficult, if not impossible, to determine if a student is following.

• Make rules reasonable for the students’ age level. Meaningful rules cut across all ages and can be used throughout the elementary school years (e.g. Respect Yourself and Others).

• Limit the number of rules (three to five is usually best).

• State rules briefly and positively. It is impossible to write a rule that covers all situations and conditions. Make the rule brief, yet broad.

Step Three: Determine Consequences When Rules Are Not Followed

When rules are broken, students must learn to accept the consequences of their misbehavior. Post the consequences for unacceptable behavior prominently in the teaching area. Discuss the rules and consequences with students to make sure they understand and see the need for behavior guidelines. Having students agree upon rules and consequences helps create “buy-in.” One of the best ways to earn students’ respect is to treat them all in a fair and caring way. Most students are willing to accept the consequences of their misbehavior if they think their treatment will be consistent with and equal to that of other students. Animosity occurs when students sense that you play favorites. Physical education teachers commonly favor gifted athletes and students who are physically attractive. Be aware of such behavior, and prevent it from occurring. One reason for defining consequences before misbehavior is that it allows you to administer the consequences equitably. When a student chooses to break a rule, apply the consequences without judging her character or making a derogatory statement about her. It is the student’s misbehavior, not you, that has triggered the consequences.

Step Four: Share Your Rules with Parents, Teachers, and Administrators

It is not enough to share your rules with students. If there is truth in the saying, “It takes a village to raise a child,” then make sure all concerned parties know and understand your rules. A newsletter to parents at the start of the year explaining your program and your approach to class management will set the tone for students immediately. Parents have little room for complaint, should their child have a problem, if routines, rules, and consequences were clearly explained from the outset. Sharing your rules with classroom teachers and administrators also helps clarify your expectations. Classroom teachers will then be able to reinforce your approach. Principals will also clearly understand what you expect, and it will be easier to work together to achieve common goals.

Step Five: Have the Class Practice Rules Systematically

Rules stipulate expected class behavior. If there is a rule for proper care of equipment, give students the opportunity to practice how you want equipment handled. If a situation requires students to stop and listen, practice and reinforce the correct behavior. Student behavior is not always correct, regardless of rules. It is common to hear teachers tell students, “How many times have I told you not to do that.” This assumes that telling students once will result in perfect adherence to rules. This is not the case. Continue to allow time for students to practice management behaviors throughout the school year.

**Major Factors in Student Achievement**

Although it is commonly believed that students from high SES backgrounds have higher academic achievement, because their parents have higher education levels, because their parents read to them, and because they have access to better programs, that is not necessarily the case. When it comes to student achievement, classroom management is the single most powerful variable influencing student learning (both in the gymnasium and in the classroom). Classroom management includes gaining student attention, holding the students accountable for learning, using efficient transitions, and having teacher awareness or “with-it-ness.”

Gaining student attention in physical education involves starting and stopping a class using consistent signals. The signals should not be the same, because it might confuse students if blowing a whistle one time meant they should begin an activity, whereas blowing it another time meant they should end it. When stopping the class, it is a good idea to give students something to do with their hands and/or equipment (e.g., put hands on waist and volleyball between feet) so these will not become distractions. Holding students accountable for learning in physical education can be accomplished in a variety of ways and a number of assessment strategies are advocated. To be most efficient, teacher checklists, self-assessments, and peer checklists can be utilized as formal assessments. Informal assessments can be conducted simply by teacher observation, questioning, and asking students to give a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” to signal their response. Transitions in physical education should be smooth and well organized. Grouping students can be completed using the “toe-to-toe” method. One way to maintain physical activity for students is to have students walk, gallop, or slide in their own personal space inside the boundaries during transition times. If the teacher needs to gather his thoughts momentarily, this keeps the students active and eliminates opportunities for them to become bored and resort to off-task behaviors. Finally, teacher awareness is key to classroom management. Managing students involves utilizing a *proactive* approach as opposed to a *reactive* approach to student behavior. Reading the students is crucial to maintaining on-task behavior and, in turn, greater student achievement. Teacher location and proximity is important to managing behavior; keeping your “back to the wall” allows the physical educator to see all students and observe any inappropriate student activity. Additionally, if the teacher approaches a student who is off-task, that student generally shifts her behavior as the teacher moves closer.

Although student aptitude, climate, program design, school organization, and state/district characteristics are all crucial factors that influence student learning, classroom instruction and climate is the most important. Within that category, classroom management is the number one variable impacting student achievement. Teachers do matter!

Incorporate Efficient Management Skills

Class management skills are prerequisites to effective instruction. To move and organize students quickly and efficiently, teachers must implement various techniques and students must accept them. Students enjoy a learning environment that is organized, efficient, and devotes nearly all of the class time to learning skills.

Teach class management skills like you teach physical skills. All skills need to be learned through practice and repetition until they become second nature. Viewing class management skills in this light makes it easier to have empathy for students who do not perform well. Just as students make mistakes when performing physical skills, some will perform management skills incorrectly. A simple, direct statement such as, “It appears that you have forgotten how to freeze quickly; let’s practice,” is much more constructive than indicting a class for its carelessness and disinterest.

Deliver Instruction Efficiently

If students are not listening when instructions are given, little learning occurs. Deliver instructions in small doses, focusing on one or two points at a time. Instructions should be specific and seldom last longer than 20 to 30 seconds. An effective approach is to alternate short instructional episodes with periods of activity. This contrasts with the common practice of delivering long, involved technical monologues on skill performance, only to find that many students have forgotten most of the information by the time practice begins. In a series of spoken items, people usually remember only the first and the last; thus, most students will be able to integrate and concentrate on only one or two points when practicing a skill. Minimizing the amount of content per instruction helps eliminate students’ frustration and allows them to focus on stated goals. This is not to suggest that information should not be delivered to students, but that the “tell it all at the start” style should be replaced by the more effective “input, practice, feedback” model.

When giving instructions, tell students when to perform an activity before stating what the activity is. An effective way to implement “when before what” is to use a keyword, such as “Begin!” or “Start!” to start an activity. For example, “When I say, ‘Start!,’ I’d like you to. . . ” or, “When I say, ‘Go!,’ I want you to jog to a beanbag, move to your own space, and practice tossing and catching.” The keyword is not given until all directions have been issued, so students must listen to all instructions before starting.

Stop and Start a Class Consistently

The most basic and important management skill is being able to stop and start a class. Use a loud audio signal to stop a class and a voice command to start the class (see the previous discussion). Many teachers like to have students assume a specific position when they stop. Freezing in the ready position with hands on knees helps keep students’ hands in their own space so they do not distract other students. Using both an audio signal (e.g., a whistle) and a visual signal (e.g., raising the hand overhead) is effective because some children may not hear the audio signal when engrossed in activity. If children do not respond to the signal to stop, take time to practice the procedure. Reinforce students when they perform management behavior properly. Often, skill performance is reinforced but correct management behavior is not. Any behavior that is not reinforced regularly will not be performed well.

Expect 100% compliance when students are asked to stop. If only some students stop and listen to directions, class morale degenerates. Students begin to wonder why they have to stop but other students do not. If you settle for less than full attention, students will fulfill those expectations for you.

Move Students into Groups and Formations Quickly

Teachers must regularly move students into small groups and instructional formations. Simple techniques can be used to help students enjoy this process and do it quickly. Any grouping technique should require students to match up with someone near them rather than running and looking for their best friend. Place some rubber marking spots in the center of the area and call them the “friendship spots.” Students who need a partner run to a friendship spot and raise their hands. After finding a partner, they move out of the friendship spot area. This approach keeps students from feeling “left out.”

Finding Partners

Use the activity Toe-to-Toe to teach children to find partners quickly. The goal of the game is to get toe-to-toe with a partner as fast as possible. Other challenges are to get elbow-to-elbow or shoulder-to-shoulder or look into a partner’s eyes. Students without a partner must go to the friendship area (described earlier) and find someone else without a partner. To keep children from looking for a favorite friend or refusing to be someone’s partner, tell them they must quickly find the nearest person. A sample cue to teach this might be, “if you have to take more than two or three steps, come to the middle.” If students insist on staying near a friend, have the class move around the area and find a different partner each time you call, “Toe-to-toe!” This technique will help children meet many more students.

Dividing a Class in Half

To divide a class into two equal groups, have students get toe-to-toe with a partner. For Developmental Level I students, have one partner sit down while the other remains standing. Those standing are asked to go to one area, after which those sitting are then moved to the desired location. With students in Developmental Levels II and III, have one partner raise a hand. Move the students with their hands up to one side of the area.

Creating Small Groups

Another activity for arranging students in groups of a selected size is Whistle Mixer. When the whistle is blown a certain number of times, students form groups corresponding to that number and sit down to show that their group has the correct number. Students left out go to the friendship area, find the needed number of members, and move to an open area. After mastering this skill, students will be able to move quickly into groups with the correct number of students. Teachers should use hand signals along with the whistle to show the desired number of students per group. To arrange students in equal-sized groups, place an equal number of different-colored beanbags or hoops on the floor. Ask students to move throughout the area and, on signal, to sit on a beanbag. All students with a red beanbag are in the same group, those with green beanbags make up another group, and so on.

Creating Circles or Single-File Lines

An effective technique for moving a class into a single-file line or circle is to have students run randomly in the area until a signal is given. On the signal to “fall in,” students continue jogging, move toward the perimeter of the area, and fall in line behind someone. Everyone jogs in the same direction as the teacher. As long as students continue to move behind another person, a circle forms automatically. Either you or a student leader can lead the line into an acceptable formation or position.

Another method of moving a class into formation is to ask students to get into various formations without talking. They can use visual signals but cannot ask someone verbally to move. Have groups hustle to see how quickly they can form the acceptable formation. Another method is to hold up a shape drawn on a large card to signal the acceptable formation. Young students learn to visualize shapes through this technique.

Use Squads to Expedite Class Organization

Some teachers find that placing students into squads helps them manage a class effectively. Squads offer a place for students to meet, keep certain students from being together, group students into prearranged teams of equal ability, and make it easier to learn students’ names. Here are some guidelines for using squads to maximize ­teaching effectiveness:

1. Squads or groups should be selected so a child who might be chosen last is not embarrassed. In all cases, avoid using an “auction” approach, where student leaders look over the group and pick their favorites. A fast way to form squads is to use the Whistle Mixer technique described earlier.

2. Designate a location for assembling students into squad formation. On signal, children move to the designated area, with squad leaders in front and the rest of the squad behind.

3. Use squad leaders so that students have an opportunity to learn leadership and following skills among peers. Examples of leadership activities are moving squads to a specific location, leading squads through exercises or introductory activities, and appointing squad members to certain positions in sport activities.

4. The composition of squads can be predetermined. It may be important to have equal representation of the sexes on each squad. The makeup of squads may be determined by ability level so that you can quickly organize games with teams of similar ability. Squads can also be used to separate certain students so they will not disrupt the class. Change squad members regularly so students can work with all students in the class.

5. In most cases, an even number of squads should be formed. This allows the class to be broken quickly into halves for games. Dividing a class of 30 students into six squads of five members each ensures a small number of students for each piece of apparatus and minimizes waiting in line for group activities.

6. Using squads should be an exciting activity that encourages movement and creativity. For example, place numbered cones in different locations around the activity area. Write the numbers in a different language, or hide them in a mathematical equation or story problem. When students enter the gym, instruct them to find their squad number and assemble. Another method is to distribute task cards specifying how the squads are arranged. The first squad to follow instructions correctly can be awarded a point or be acknowledged by the rest of the class. Examples of tasks for squads might be arranging the members in a circle, sitting with their hands on their heads, or assuming crab positions in a straight line facing northwest. Task cards can also be used to specify an introductory activity or tell students where to move for the fitness development activity.

7. An effective way to use squads is called “home base.” Place a number of marking spots on the floor throughout the area. When the teacher calls “home base,” the captains quickly find the closest spot, and their squad members line up behind them. If an even number of squads has been created, half of the spots can be put in each half of the area. When “home base” is called, the class quickly divides in half. This is handy for station teaching as well; place a spot at each of the teaching stations and call “home base” to line up a squad at each station.

Know Students’ Names

Effective class management requires learning the names of your students. JamarionDevelop a system to help you learn names. One approach is to memorize three or four names per class period. Write the names on a note card, and identify those students at the start and throughout the period. At the end of the period, identify the students again. Each time the class meets, continue in this way until you know everyone’s name.

Tell students you are trying to learn their names. Ask them to say their name before performing a skill or answering a question. After learning a student’s name, you can use it during activities; for example, say, “Mary, it’s your turn to jump.”

Another approach to learning names is to photograph each class, in squads, and identify students by matching names to the picture. Before class, identify a few students whose names you know and a few you do not know. Set personal goals by calculating the percentage of students whose names you know after each period.

Establish Pre- and Post-Teaching Routines

Children appreciate the security of knowing what to do from the time they enter the instructional area until they leave. Effective teaching demands routine handling of certain procedures. The following situations occur before and after teaching and need to be planned for before the lesson.

Nonparticipation

An efficient system should be devised for screening children who cannot participate in the lesson. The school nurse or classroom teacher should make the decision as to whether a child should participate in physical education. This avoids a situation in which the physical education teacher encourages students to participate even though they have a written excuse from parents or a physician. A note from the classroom teacher or school nurse, listing the names and health problems of those who are to sit out or to take part in modified activity, can be delivered as children enter the room. Accept the information at face value and avoid questioning students about their reason for nonparticipation. A student with a note from home or from a physician should never be allowed to participate without parental permission.

Entering the Teaching Area

Nothing is more difficult than trying to start a class when students enter in a loud, disorderly way. Meet your class at the door. Explain how students should enter the area and what they are supposed to do. Alternatively, have the class enter the area and begin jogging around the teaching space. On the signal to freeze, students stop and listen as the day’s activities are described. Another, less desirable method is to have students enter the area and sit in squads behind their cones or floor markers. Instruction starts when all students are in position. Regardless of the method used, students should enter the area under control, knowing where they are supposed to meet.

When a classroom teacher lets students straggle in late, or brings the entire class in late, it disrupts the instructional process. Discuss the problem of tardiness with the teacher and try to find a solution. Try designating a couple of responsible students in each class to remind the classroom teacher that physical education begins in 5 minutes. Alternatively, designate an area away from the teaching area where classes can assemble, and request that they line up at the gym door as soon as the entire group is ready. Resolve this problem quickly even if it requires asking the school’s administrator to intervene.

Starting the Lesson

Students enter the activity area wanting to move. Take advantage of their urge to move by engaging them in some activity before discussing the lesson. Students are more willing to listen after they have participated in vigorous activity. Let them try an activity before instructing them on points of technique; this gives you an opportunity to assess their performance level. Many students listen to instruction better after trying an activity and finding they need help.

Closing the Lesson

Following a regular routine for closing the lesson is beneficial. It allows time for concluding the instructional content as well as a procedure for leaving the teaching area. If you want the students to arrive in an orderly fashion, they should leave physical education in an orderly fashion. A closing routine helps calm and quiet students and is appreciated by classroom teachers picking up their class. Another way to calm students is to take a few minutes for relaxation activities.

Equipment Procedures

Make students responsible for securing the equipment they use. Teach students how you want them to get the equipment and how you want them to return it at the end of the lesson. This minimizes the amount of equipment rearrangement you will have to do. Place your equipment around the perimeter of the teaching area so all students have easy access. Using students to assist in distributing and gathering equipment before and after school makes it possible to work closely with students who need special attention.

Dealing with Student Behavior Problems

Children who misbehave during class need to be talked to after class. This makes it critical to schedule a minimum of 5 minutes of passing time between classes. Scheduling classes back-to-back makes it impossible to talk with students, rearrange equipment, and take care of personal matters. If time between classes is unavailable, give a “meeting appointment” form to the classroom teacher and student. This reminds both parties of the student’s obligation to meet with you at the end of the school day.

Use Equipment Effectively

When using small equipment such as balls, hoops, and jump ropes, be sure that every student has a piece for personal use. For large equipment or apparatus, establish as many stations or groups as possible. A class of 30 requires a minimum of six benches, mats, or jumping boxes to keep waiting time short. One way to cut students’ waiting time is to use return activities, so students can perform a task or tasks while returning to their squad.

Teach students where to place the equipment during instruction. Equipment should be in the same (home) position when the class is called to attention. For example, beanbags are placed on the floor, basketballs between the feet, and jump ropes folded and placed at the feet. Placing the equipment in home position avoids the problem of children striking one another with the equipment, dropping it, or practicing activities when they should be listening. To keep students from playing with the equipment when it is placed on the floor, ask them to take a giant step away from it.

Distribute equipment to students as rapidly as possible. When they have to wait in line for a piece of equipment, time is wasted and behavior problems occur. Many teachers assign student leaders to get the equipment for their squad, but this approach results in many students sitting and waiting. A better, faster method is to have the equipment placed around the perimeter of the area. On signal, students move to acquire a piece of equipment, take it to their personal space, and begin practicing an assigned skill. This approach takes advantage of the natural urge to try the equipment and reinforces students who procure equipment quickly. Use the reverse procedure to put equipment away. Any method beats the often-used practice of placing the equipment in the middle of the area in a container and having students “run and get a ball.” This approach raises children’s chances of being aggravated or hurt. Similarly, handing equipment to each individual student is inactive, inefficient, and tends to yield behaviour problems.

However, you have students acquire equipment, clearly explain what to do with the equipment after they get it. Waiting for all students to get equipment before starting allows the slowest and least cooperative students to set the pace. Do not make students who have hustled to get their equipment wait for the laggards. Rather, reward them by letting them start practicing as soon as they get their equipment. This provides incentive to hustle and be efficient. Interact with those students who are slow and less cooperative while the others are practicing.