

Classroom Management Strategies

There are many things to consider when working to create a successful classroom environment for all students. While disruptions and distractions are inevitable in any classroom, there are strategies that you, the educator, can implement to help ensure that everyone feels prepared and confident in the classroom!

1. Begin the year by setting clear expectations. Be specific about the classroom rules and how students can expect you to respond to a variety of situations. This includes ensuring that students know the best way to get your attention, how to request to use the bathroom or take a break, if/when they can eat or drink, etc. Allow students to help write these rules and expectations, and then display them where students can see them. Start each class with a reminder of the rules, and a commitment to follow them.
2. Focus on culturally-appropriate, precise, sincere, meaningful, specific effort-based praise at key moments, such as when a student follows teacher directions, raises their hand when they want to speak, or assists a peer. Try to give this type of praise to all students at least once per class period. If we wait until students are engaging in inappropriate behaviors to acknowledge them or give them attention, we may inadvertently be teaching them that that is how to get attention.
3. If/when students do engage in inappropriate or maladaptive behavior, note the possible reason for this behavior before doling out a consequence. For example, if a student continuously interrupts the class because he/she wants to get sent out of the classroom, then the consequence for this behavior must be different than the student who interrupts in order to gain attention.
4. After a few weeks/months of meeting with your class, you should begin to notice patterns of when/what challenging behaviors occur most frequently. Note these patterns and consider proactive strategies rather than reactive ones. For example, if certain students are getting out of their seats and distracting peers at the halfway point of every class session, consider providing them with a movement/brain break before they begin distracting others.
5. Finally, some students may need specific plans, incentives, and check-ins in order to be most successful. Be thoughtful and creative about what you can do to keep students happy and engaged based on what their interests are and what they find motivating. If the student has a strong relationship with someone else in the school, allow for regular check-ins with that trusted adult so the student feels seen and supported.

Underscoring all of these recommendations is the need for relationship-building. Teachers should devote time every class (particularly at the beginning of the year) to connecting with students and getting to know their personalities, interests, and activities outside of religious school. Consider starting the year with a survey asking them about themselves and share similar information about yourself. Take the time every session to check with them about how they are doing, what is new, and what is on their minds. Genuine and authentic relationships are the foundation for any successful classroom management strategy.