



DOCTRIVA LEARNING
Keep Teaching and Learning Alive

Core Teaching Framework Managing in the Moment



The teacher anchors the classroom environment.

Managing in the Moment addresses how teachers construct and maintain classroom environments, build relationships that make learning possible, and respond effectively to disruption. The teacher serves as the anchor, a source of stability that holds the environment together.

This framework is organized around three interconnected elements: the classroom environment the teacher constructs, the relationships among teacher and students that make the environment work, and the moments when the teacher must guide the classroom through disruptions and return to learning.

Part 1: Constructing the Environment

First Principle: The teacher is the anchor of the classroom.

The students are the reason the classroom is there, but it is the teacher who determines what and how things happen. Being the anchor is not just a position of authority; it is a source of stability. Teachers of all personalities can hold the environment together. They are the ones who make the school's curriculum and discipline plans work. This is why good teachers are indispensable.



Second Principle: The teacher constructs and maintains the classroom environment.

The environment the teacher constructs includes containment, support, structure, involvement, and validation.

Containment means physical and emotional safety. Physical safety involves making the best use of the physical space of the classroom and having structures in place to manage movement and resources within the space. Emotional safety in the classroom includes safety to try, safety to ask questions, and safety to make mistakes. Regardless of whatever other experiences students may bring with them to the classroom, it can and should be a safe place for them.

Support means that the students feel that the teacher is there to help them academically, socially, and emotionally. This doesn't mean that teachers should not call out bad behavior and bad choices. In fact, doing so is essential. Students should, however, recognize that the teacher is there to help them.

Structure means intentionality in everything that is done in the classroom. Patterns of time and activity are predictable. This doesn't mean that there can't be variations or that special times don't call for special structures, but the day-to-day should be routine.

These structures should include: lessons, activities or materials; energy levels; assigned work and grading routines (including plans for the return of graded work), plans for distribution and collection of materials and any other variable that affects the flow of the environment of the classroom.

These don't necessarily always need to be formalized, but some classes, subjects, or age-groups may need more formal structures to work effectively. Some of these structures may need to be fluid as the environment changes and may have to be adapted for different groups of students or for students at different times of the day. When expectations are clear and consistently maintained, students experience safety in predictability. When boundaries are firm students learn they can trust the structure to hold. Students thrive in effective structures.

Involvement means that the teacher and students are all participating in the life of the classroom. In some ways it is a by-product of safety, structure, and support but it needs



to be encouraged and nurtured in its own right. It can also mean helping those who are more involved and often contribute to make space for others. It is a matter of belonging.

Validation means that every student feels that who they are has worth and value. Effort, taking good risks, and trying are encouraged, acknowledged, and celebrated. Students' thoughts, questions, and concerns are respected. Mistakes are understood as situations to be fixed. Even when a student causes harm to the classroom environment, the inherent worth of that person is maintained. Students are recognized as more than just their presence and performance in the classroom.

Classroom culture must be consistent with and reflect the culture of the school and the greater community that the school serves. Teachers should actively find ways to make sure that the environment they are creating is consistent with these greater contexts even if they don't necessarily reflect the teacher's experience.

Part 2: Relationship as Foundation

Third Principle: Relationship is the foundation that makes management work.

The classroom environment works because the teacher builds relationships with students. These relationships are the bridge between the structures the teacher creates and the moments when those structures are tested.

Strong teacher-student relationships can take many forms. All forms do require, though, that students experience the teacher as someone who sees them as individuals, believes in their capacity to succeed, understands that challenging behaviors are not always intentional, remains steady even when students test boundaries, and maintains high expectations while providing genuine support.

Teachers can build effective relationships with students through: being a consistent, reliable presence; noticing and acknowledging student effort and growth; being interested in students' lives outside the classroom; demonstrating both high expectations and support; and working to repair relationships when they are ruptured. This foundation can be critical when trying to redirect students and neutralize disruptions.



Part 3: Managing the Moment

Fourth Principle: The teacher is constantly monitoring and managing the environment; adjusting to the energy of the classroom.

As the anchor of the classroom, the teacher is reading the room, sensing shifts in energy, and trying to anticipate problems before they escalate. This requires situational awareness and the willingness to enter into developing situations early. Adjustments can be subtle or direct, public or private, loud or soft, individual or group. All have value. While teachers may feel more aligned with certain approaches they should be able to use all of them and recognize when and how to use each one.

Fifth Principle: Transitions happen throughout the day and must be actively managed.

Transitions occur: from home to school, from class to class, from activity to activity, from one energy and structure level to another (class to lunch, lunch to class, class to break or recess, break or recess to class, one teacher to another teacher, school to home). Properly structuring and managing these transitions is key to managing the class. Many disruptions happen during transitions because the structure temporarily loosens. Being intentional about how transitions happen can help prevent most of these problems.

Sixth Principle: At moments of intense disruption, the primary goal of the teacher is to return the classroom environment to its proper balance.

Most of the time, a well-constructed classroom environment runs fairly well with minimal adjustments by the teacher, but other times the energy of the classroom is different, requiring more extensive adjustments. Sometimes it is possible to sense potential disruptions (students who look ready to cause a problem or a situation ready to get out of hand) and make adjustments before the disruptions occur.



Other times, it isn't possible, and the teacher faces the moment when a student or students engage in a major disruption which may involve a direct challenge to the teacher or creating a situation where the teacher must respond directly. These disruptions can have many sources and may have little or nothing to do with the actual situation in the classroom. Students may not be able to respond rationally in these times. Keeping that in mind can help teachers act effectively and dispassionately.

These disruptions may call for consequences as defined in a school's policies, a restoration process to deal with the harm caused to the community, or an analysis of the cause of the disruption. In the moment, however, the primary goal after student safety is the return of the classroom environment to its primary goals and functions. Other elements can and should be dealt with, but later.

Seventh Principle: Teachers can best respond to disruptions when they move and act from their professional center.

A centered teacher can remain calm and effectively respond to disruptions, including ones where they may feel emotionally or verbally attacked. This professional center is built from the teacher's personality, personal mission, values, and experience. It is the foundation that keeps the teacher balanced and personally anchored.

When teachers react with emotions (quick-tempered words, defensive posture, taking things personally), they are already pulled off-balance. When teachers move and act from their professional centers, corrections and deescalations are grounded in the entire classroom environment and relationships they have established. They are unshakeable.

For example, most teachers have faced a student who has challenged the teacher's ability, the effectiveness of a particular activity, or even the value of the subject matter. This can easily pull a teacher off his or her balance leading to an escalation of the disruption. A teacher acting from a professional center can recognize the challenge for what it is and return the class to its proper balance.



Eighth Principle: Do not struggle against resistance. Redirect the energy.

Struggle leads to escalation. What is more often called for is de-escalation. Sometimes this means just standing firm and solid, recognizing that the challenge, like the one in the seventh principle, is not substantive. Sometimes it means guiding the resistance or disruption to a place where it is not causing harm. Giving the student one or more ways to return to the work of a class can end the immediate situation right there. If rules have been violated, there can and should be consequences. If relationships have been harmed, restoration can and should occur. But because the teacher has remained anchored, the class remains anchored. An anchored class can work through any challenging situation.



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