



## *chapter*

# 1

# Understanding Management and Discipline in the Classroom

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

### What Is Classroom Management?

- Management and Instructional Variables

- Student and Teacher Perceptions of Classroom Management

- Building Caring Relationships

- Areas of Responsibility

### A Community of Learners

### Understanding Misbehavior

- Order in the Classroom

- Misbehavior in Context

- Types of Misbehavior

- Causes of Misbehavior

- Degrees of Severity

### Principles for Working with Students and Preventing Misbehavior

## CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

This chapter provides information that will help you:

- Describe and apply the management and instructional variables for effective classroom management.
- Develop and nurture caring relationships in the classroom.
- Describe the role of classroom management in creating a learning community.
- Identify the areas of responsibility in classroom management and discipline.
- Determine what constitutes order in the classroom.
- Describe the types and causes of student misbehavior.
- Apply principles for working with students to create a positive learning environment.

What do award-winning teachers do that make them so popular and successful? Do they jazz up the curriculum in some way? Do they use especially creative instructional approaches? Do they warm up to the students as if they were their own children? Do they add some magic or sparkle to the classroom experience? The answer is probably a little of each of those things. But it likely goes deeper than that.

Successful teachers are often very effective managers of the classroom environment. They create a positive learning community where students are actively involved in their own learning and in the management of the classroom. They organize the physical environment, manage student behavior, create a respectful environment, facilitate instruction, promote safety and wellness, and interact with others when needed. All of these actions relate to classroom management. The main objective is to create a positive learning community and then to take steps to maintain that positive environment by guiding and correcting student behavior.

## What Is Classroom Management?

*Classroom management* involves teacher actions to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

Several key questions come to mind regarding classroom management.

- How can the physical environment be organized?
- How can the school year begin effectively? What rules and procedures are appropriate?
- How can students be held academically accountable?
- How can appropriate behavior be encouraged and supported?
- How might order be restored if there are disruptions?
- How can class time and instruction be managed effectively?
- How can the safety of students be assured?

All of these issues are part of classroom management.

Before discussing these areas of responsibility in classroom management, this section explores management and instructional variables, student and teacher perceptions of classroom management, and caring relationships.

## Management and Instructional Variables

In their review of the process-outcome research on classroom management, Gettinger and Kohler (2006) reported that effective teaching is related to a teacher's ability to use appropriate management strategies while simultaneously providing high-quality instruction. These teacher behaviors contribute to achievement gains as well as other benefits such as task engagement, active learning, motivation, and positive attitudes that prevent misbehavior. According to Gettinger and Kohler, the following classroom management and instructional variables are designed to promote positive behavior and academic gains:

### **Classroom Management Variables:**

- Classroom rules
- Smooth transitions between activities
- Beginning-of-the-year management activities
- Efficient use of learning time
- Monitoring student performance
- Communicating awareness of the classroom behavior

### **Instructional Variables:**

- Teacher-directed learning
- High level of active student involvement or responding
- Guided student practice to promote success
- Flexible instruction to match student needs
- Cooperative learning strategies
- Humor and enthusiasm incorporated into teaching
- Use of motivational strategies that foster goal orientation

Elements of effective teaching and classroom management derived from the process-outcome research serve as the foundation for many teacher professional development programs and preservice training programs. In fact, that research served as the basis for many of the professional teaching standards outlined on the standards tables displayed in this book just after the Preface. This process-outcome research attests to the important role of the teacher in creating and maintaining a positive classroom environment that promotes academic and social competence.

## Student and Teacher Perceptions of Classroom Management

Hoy and Weinstein (2006) reviewed the research concerning student and teacher perceptions of classroom management, and they found these perceptions differed.

### ***Student Perceptions***

The research demonstrated that students who like their teachers and perceive them to be supportive are more likely to engage in prosocial, responsible behavior; to adhere to classroom rules and norms; and to engage in academic activities. Thus, students perceive “good” teachers as worthy of respect, cooperation, and participation. Three factors were central to student perceptions of “good” teachers:

1. Ability to establish caring relationships with students
2. Ability to exercise authority without being rigid, threatening, or punitive
3. Ability to make learning fun

For students, good classroom management requires a fair and reasonable system of classroom rules and procedures that protect and respect students. Teachers are expected to care for the students, their learning, and their personal lives before the students will respect and cooperate with the teachers. Students want teachers to maintain order without being mean or punitive. As they mature, students value choices and chances for responsibilities; they do not want to feel coerced or controlled.

### ***Teacher Perceptions***

In contrast to student perceptions, teachers are more focused on order and on academic concerns; they want students to cooperate in class activities and perform well on assessments. Compliance is a common teacher goal for disciplinary interventions. Teachers seem to believe that students need to earn their respect, relationship, concern, and interest. Choices and autonomy support come with successful self-regulation and not before. Some teachers believe that being “mean” or firm may be necessary, in the beginning at least, to establish authority (bringing to mind the adage of “Don’t smile until Christmas”).

### ***Practical Implications***

The differences in student and teacher perceptions concerning classroom management have implications for practice. First, teachers must recognize that to teach well, they must also put effort into creating positive relationships with students. The research demonstrates the link between positive student–teacher relationships and students’ motivation to become engaged with academic activities. Second, teachers should exercise their authority in fair, respectful ways, and not through the use of punitive techniques that cause public humiliation. Students cite the importance of setting limits and enforcing expectations, but in reasonable ways. Third, teachers need to acknowledge the inseparable relationship between classroom management and instruction. Lessons that encourage active student participation and address student interests, needs, and backgrounds will foster academic achievement as well as the goodwill, respect, and cooperation that are needed for a productive learning environment.

## **Building Caring Relationships**

Elias and Schwab (2006) reviewed the research on social and emotional learning and its relationship to classroom management. Their findings confirm the importance of developing caring relationships in the classroom to support instruction and classroom management.

Developing a supportive community in the classroom helps to impart a sense of each student’s belonging, to alleviate students’ social anxieties and frustrations, to motivate students to comply with teacher requests, and to act prosocially with peers. Consequently, the level of respect for teachers and students increases, negative and aggressive social behaviors are reduced, and students are more likely to comply with the rules. Because of this, building caring relationships

**VOICES FROM THE CLASSROOM** What Is Classroom Management?

**Claudia Arguello Coca, fifth-grade teacher, Las Cruces, New Mexico**

When I began teaching 10 years ago, I thought classroom management meant being the one in control of my class. Control was the number one objective for me, because then I knew that my students would be safe, would receive the best instruction, and would be well behaved (thus making me look good). But every approach I used to control the environment did not work.

Gradually, I learned that children will follow you if you encourage them and take the time to catch them doing great things. Some flexibility is also needed. Students want to impress you and will do anything you ask if you manage your class by focusing on hardworking students and positive behaviors. These lessons have allowed me to have great success with my students.

I always keep in mind that my students are little children. I make a huge effort to treat them like little children, offer them kind words, create a safe and predictable environment, and provide a fun learning stage. I have one rule for myself—always talk to my students as if their parents were standing behind them. When I work with my students, I want us to work together cooperatively. This only happens when my students feel safe and comfortable with me.

is the first step in the promotion of responsible behavior and the prevention of misbehavior (Davis, Summers, & Miller, 2012).

Relationships in the classroom fall into three types: teacher–student, student–student, and the classroom community.

### ***Teacher-Student Relationships***

When students sense that a teacher cares for them, they see the teacher as more credible and as an ally. This increases motivation to follow directions, to adhere to rules, and to put in effort for classroom activities. Teachers can express caring and respect for students by being welcoming, learning about students' lives, being sensitive to students' concerns, establishing and enforcing clear expectations for behavior, being fair, welcoming students' input, being like a real person (as well as a teacher), being aware of the student culture, promoting autonomy, being inclusive, searching for students' strengths, and developing communication skills (Jones, 2011; Weinstein & Novodvorsky, 2015).

### ***Student-Student Relationships and the Classroom Community***

Teachers can establish the conditions for social interaction and can intervene to help these relationships develop positively in several ways. First, teachers can begin the year by helping students feel comfortable with each other in the classroom. This can be done with group-building activities, opportunities to share personal experiences and interests, and establishing an ethic of teamwork and helping one another with everyday tasks and problems. Second, teachers can involve students in deciding what rules should govern the classroom. Third, teachers can discuss, teach, and model a problem-solving approach to understanding and resolving personal mistakes and dilemmas (Garrett, 2014).

## **Areas of Responsibility**

An effective classroom manager handles the following seven areas of responsibility in classroom management and discipline (see Table 1.1):

- 1. Select a philosophical model of classroom management and discipline.** A number of educators have proposed certain models of classroom management and discipline, such as teaching with love and logic, cooperative discipline, discipline with dignity, and assertive

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■ **TABLE 1.1** Areas of Responsibility in Classroom Management and Discipline

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Classroom management involves teacher actions to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation. An effective classroom manager handles these areas of responsibility:

1. Select a philosophical model of classroom management and discipline.
  2. Organize the physical environment.
  3. Manage student behavior.
  4. Create a respectful, supportive learning environment.
  5. Manage and facilitate instruction.
  6. Promote classroom safety and wellness.
  7. Interact with colleagues, families, and others to achieve classroom management objectives.
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discipline (see Chapter 2). These models reflect various philosophical views of student development, teaching and learning, and classroom management. Viewing these proposed models on a continuum, they range from low teacher control to high teacher control.

These theoretical models are useful to teachers because they offer a basis for analyzing, understanding, and managing student and teacher behavior. With an understanding of these varied theoretical approaches, you can assess your position on these issues and then select a philosophical model that is consistent with your beliefs. The techniques you use to manage student behavior should be consistent with your beliefs about how students learn and develop.

2. **Organize the physical environment.** The way the desks, tables, and other classroom materials are arranged affects instruction and influences order in the classroom (see Chapter 3). To create an effective learning environment, you will need to organize several aspects of the physical space. First, you will need to arrange the floor space by the placement of student desks, the teacher's desk, bookcases, filing cabinets, tables, and activity centers. Second, you will need to decide how to store a number of materials, including textbooks and resource books, frequently used instructional materials, teacher supplies and instructional materials, equipment, and infrequently used materials. Finally, you will need to decide how to use bulletin boards and wall space. Decisions in all of these areas will determine how you will organize the physical environment for teaching and learning.
3. **Manage student behavior.** Guidelines are needed to promote order in the classroom and to provide a conducive learning environment (see Chapter 4). Rules and procedures support teaching and learning and provide students with clear expectations and well-defined norms. This, in turn, helps create a safe, secure atmosphere for learning.

*Rules* are general codes of conduct that are intended to guide individual student behavior in an attempt to promote positive interaction and avoid disruptive behavior. *Procedures* are approved ways to achieve specific tasks in the classroom, such as handing in completed work or sharpening a pencil.

When misbehavior occurs, teachers need to respond in an effort to get the student back on task and to maintain order in the classroom. A three-step response plan is discussed in Chapter 9, including providing assistance to get the student back on task as the first step, followed by the use of mild responses such as nonverbal and verbal signals, and then ending with moderate responses such as withdrawing privileges or changing the seat assignment. Special approaches are often needed to deal with challenging students (see Chapter 10).

To establish order, you must teach, demonstrate, establish, and enforce classroom procedures and routines at the start of the year. Successful classroom managers hover over activities at the beginning of the year and usher them along until students have learned the work system.

**4. Create a respectful, supportive learning environment.** There are many facets to creating a favorable learning environment, but it is vital for a positive learning community. First, teachers can take a number of actions to establish a cooperative, responsible classroom by developing positive teacher–student relationships, promoting students’ self-esteem, and building group cohesiveness (see Chapter 5). These actions will help create an environment where students feel valued and comfortable, thus setting the stage for teaching and learning. Second, teachers can focus student attention on appropriate classroom behavior by helping students assume responsibility for their behavior, by maintaining student attention and involvement, and by reinforcing desired behaviors (see Chapter 5).

Third, a comprehensive plan can be developed to motivate students to learn, involving decisions about instructional tasks, feedback and evaluation, and academic and behavioral expectations (see Chapter 8). Finally, teachers can be most effective in creating a respectful, supportive learning environment when they have an understanding of the diverse learners in their classroom and of students with special needs (see Chapter 7).

**5. Manage and facilitate instruction.** Certain factors in a lesson have a bearing on classroom order, and teachers need to take these factors into account when planning lessons (see Chapter 8). These include decisions about the degree of structure of the lesson, the type of instructional groups to use, and the means of holding the students academically accountable.

There are also certain actions that teachers often take at the beginning, middle, and end of a lesson that affect the order of the classroom. These include actions such as taking attendance, giving directions, distributing materials, handling transitions, summarizing the lesson, and preparing to leave. Collectively, these instructional management skills help manage and facilitate instruction while also influencing classroom order.

**6. Promote classroom safety and wellness.** Students need to feel physically and emotionally safe before they can give their full attention to the instructional tasks. Strategies used to manage student behavior, create a supportive classroom, and manage and facilitate instruction all contribute to classroom safety and wellness. In addition, teachers sometimes need to take actions to solve problems and conflicts that threaten classroom order and the learning environment. For that reason, it is helpful to have a set of tools such as dealing with conflict resolution and anger management to solve problems (see Chapter 10).

Students who are considered difficult or challenging may threaten the sense of safety and wellness in the classroom. Their actions may cause other students to take guarded or even confrontational actions in response to difficult students. For that reason, teachers need to be prepared to deal with challenging students in constructive ways (Chapter 10).

**7. Interact with colleagues, families, and others to achieve classroom management objectives.** Working with families is another means to help maintain order in the classroom (see Chapter 11). When families and teachers communicate and get along together, students are more likely to receive the needed guidance and support and will probably have more self-control in the classroom. In addition, teachers may need to consult and interact with colleagues and others when difficulties occur with classroom management and student behavior.

## A Community of Learners

Over the years, the way teachers have gone about instruction has changed as more is known about the nature of teaching and learning. In recent years, more emphasis has been placed on building learning communities in the classroom because students appear to be most successful in that environment. Problems with student misbehavior are also minimized in an environment where students are actively involved in their classroom and their instruction.

A learning community is designed to help all students feel safe, respected, and valued in order to learn new skills. Anxiety, discomfort, and fear are incompatible with the learning process and make teaching and learning difficult. Successful classrooms are those in which students feel supported in their learning, are willing to take risks, are challenged to become fully human with one another, and are open to new possibilities.

With the increasing diversity in classrooms, the need to create supportive classroom communities becomes even more important. Teachers must identify community building as a high priority if we are to have classrooms that include diverse students and make them welcome, appreciated, and valued members of the classroom environment. Actions can be taken to build an inclusive classroom learning community.

In *Because We Can Change the World*, Sapon-Shevin (2010) identified five characteristics of learning communities:

- 1. Security.** A safe, secure community allows for growth and exploration. A nurturing community is a place where it is safe to be yourself, take risks, ask for help and support, and delight in accomplishments. A safe environment helps protect students from distractions and disruptions that interfere with the learning process.
- 2. Open communication.** In a cohesive environment, there is open communication. All forms of communication—oral, written, artistic, and nonverbal—are encouraged. In safe, accepting environments, students' individual differences and needs are openly acknowledged. Students share freely what is happening, what they need, and what they are worried about. Since all students have the right to feel safe, for example, open communication should be encouraged to address the concerns.
- 3. Mutual liking.** In supportive classroom communities, students are encouraged to know and like their classmates. Opportunities are provided for students to interact with one another, and students are given many chances and strategies for learning to see and say nice things about classmates.
- 4. Shared goals or objectives.** Cooperative communities are those in which students work together to reach a shared goal or objective. This can be achieved with whole-class projects where students work toward a goal while interacting and supporting one another.
- 5. Connectedness and trust.** In learning communities, students feel a part of the whole. They know that they are needed, valued members of the group. They know that others are depending on them to put forth their best effort. Trust and connectedness mean sharing the good things as well as any concerns or problems.

#### VOICES FROM THE CLASSROOM    Creating a Peaceful Classroom Community

**Sheila Shelby, fifth-grade teacher, Columbia, South Carolina**

Determining rules and procedures for the classroom is essential for effective classroom management to be sustained throughout the school year. At the beginning of school, I spend a great deal of time working with students to create an accepting and supportive learning community.

During this time, I read *Peace Begins with You* by Katherine Scholes. As I read the book, students are asked to listen for ways that we can be peacemakers. Afterward, we discuss these ideas and generate a list of four or five ways that we can be peacemakers in our own classroom community. This list has included items such as helping our classmates and teachers, listening and following directions, having and showing good manners, sharing, and resolving conflicts.



To create a learning community, teachers often plan lessons designed to involve students in cooperative learning activities. These activities seem to have three elements that are critical to their success: face-to-face interactions, a feeling of positive interdependence, and a feeling of individual accountability. In addition, it is necessary to teach students social skills and to process group functioning for these learning activities to be successful.

Teachers also need to arrange the physical environment for instruction, guide and correct behavior, and create a supportive classroom. All of these responsibilities for creating a learning community relate to classroom management. In *Widening the Circle*, Sapon-Shevin (2007) describes ways to build inclusive classroom communities.

## Understanding Misbehavior

Even with an effective management system in place, students may lose interest in the lesson and get off task. You must be prepared to respond with appropriate strategies to restore order. To provide a context for your decision making in this area, you should first understand order in the classroom, misbehavior in context, the types and causes of misbehavior, and the degree of severity that is exhibited.

It is important first to recognize that the best way to deal with discipline problems is to avoid them in the first place. You should develop challenging, interesting, and exciting lessons and treat students with dignity and respect. If misbehavior then occurs, you can consider the guidelines and principles presented in Chapter 9 for dealing with inappropriate behavior.

## Order in the Classroom

A learning community needs to have order for students to be successful. *Order* means that students are following the actions necessary for a particular classroom event to be successful; students are focused on the instructional tasks and are not misbehaving. Establishing and maintaining order is an important part of classroom management.

It is useful to distinguish the difference between off-task behavior and misbehavior. *Off-task behavior* includes student actions that are not focused on the instructional activities, yet would not be considered to be disruptive or be defined as misbehavior. Off-task behavior includes daydreaming, writing notes or doodling, or not paying attention.

*Misbehavior* includes behavior that interferes with your teaching, interferes with the rights of others to learn, is psychologically or physically unsafe, or destroys property (Levin & Nolan, 2014). Classroom order is threatened by misbehavior. *Discipline* is the act of responding to misbehaving students in an effort to restore order.

There are several important issues concerning order.

- 1. A minimal level of order is necessary for instruction to occur.** Order can be established for instruction by actions such as selecting rules and procedures, encouraging and reinforcing appropriate behavior, reacting to misbehavior, and managing instructional tasks. With many students off task, instruction cannot occur.
- 2. Student involvement in learning tasks is affected by order in the classroom.** An effective classroom manager places emphasis on managing the group rather than managing individual students. When there is order in the classroom, then individual students can become engaged in the instructional tasks.
- 3. Student cooperation is necessary to establish order.** Order in classrooms is achieved *with* students and depends on their willingness to be part of the sequence of events. Students in a learning community want to cooperate because they see the benefits for them.

- 4. Expectations for order are affected by a number of classroom variables.** Teacher expectations for order may vary depending on factors such as the type of instructional activities, the maturity level of the students, the time of day, the time in the lesson, and the particular students involved. For example, a teacher might not enforce a certain rule at the end of a class period when students are gathering their books and materials in the same way as when a discussion is underway in the middle of the class period.

## Misbehavior in Context

Students who are off task are not performing the planned instructional activity. They may be pausing to think about an issue, daydreaming, or doing other things that are nondisruptive but prohibit them from being engaged in the instructional activities. Students who are off task need to be addressed differently than students who are purposely misbehaving and interfering with the academic activities. In such cases, you may need to intervene to stop the misbehavior.

Recognize that your decisions about interventions are complex judgments about the act, the student, and the circumstances at a particular moment in classroom time. Some student actions are clearly misbehavior and require teacher intervention. In many cases, however, the situation is not quite so simple. The key to understanding misbehavior is to view what students do in the context of the classroom structure. Not every infraction of a rule is necessarily misbehavior. For instance, inattention in the last few minutes of a class session will often be tolerated because the lesson is coming to an end. However, you would most likely intervene when inattention is evident earlier in the class.

Misbehavior, then, needs to be seen as “action in context” and requires interpretation based on what the teacher knows about the likely configuration of events. You need to make reliable judgments about the probable consequences of students’ actions in different situations. Consistency in your response does not mean that you need to behave in the same way every time, but rather, that your judgments are reliable and consistent.

## Types of Misbehavior

*Misbehavior* includes behavior that interferes with your teaching, interferes with the rights of others to learn, is psychologically or physically unsafe, or destroys property. This misbehavior may show up in the classroom in a number of ways, as indicated in the following categories:

- **Needless talk.** Student talks during instructional time about topics unrelated to the lesson or talks when should be silent.
- **Annoying others.** Student teases, calls names, or bothers others.
- **Moving around the room.** Student moves around the room without permission or goes to areas where not permitted.
- **Noncompliance.** Student does not do what is requested, breaks rules, argues, makes excuses, delays, does the opposite of what is asked.
- **Disruption.** Student talks or laughs inappropriately, hums or makes noises, gets into things, causes “accidents.”
- **Aggressive actions.** Student shows hostility toward others, pushes or fights, verbally abuses, is cruel to others, damages property, steals others’ property.
- **Defiance of authority.** Student talks back to the teacher, is hostile to comply with the teacher’s requests.

## Causes of Misbehavior

One way to understand classroom control is to determine why students misbehave. In some cases, the reasons are complex and personal and perhaps beyond your comprehension or control. However, a number of causes of misbehavior can be addressed directly by the teacher.

- 1. Health factors.** Student behavior problems may be related to health factors. Lack of sleep, an allergy, illness, or an inadequate diet may greatly affect the student's ability to complete assignments or interact with others. For some children, sugar has an effect on their behavior and may result in hyperactivity. Physical impairments such as a vision or hearing loss, paralysis, or a severe physiological disorder may also contribute to behavior problems.
- 2. Neurological conditions.** Some students may have a mental disorder that affects their behavior in some way. For example, attention deficit disorder is a mental disorder in which the area of the brain that controls motor activity doesn't work as it should. This is among the most common childhood mental disorders and affects 9 percent of American children age 13 to 18 years, according to the National Institute of Mental Health (2013). Such students may be inattentive (are easily distracted, don't follow directions well, shift from one unfinished task to another, and seem not to be listening), hyperactive (are talkative or fidgety), and impulsive (don't wait their turn, blurt out answers, and engage in dangerous activities without considering the consequences). Children born with fetal alcohol syndrome may be hyperactive or impulsive, and crack babies (children born to women who were using crack cocaine during pregnancy) may exhibit similar behaviors.
- 3. Medication or drugs.** Medication or drugs, whether legal or illegal, may also be a factor. Over-the-counter medicine for nasal congestion, for example, may cause a student to be less alert than usual. Alcohol or drug abuse also may contribute to unusual behavior at school.
- 4. Influences from the home or society.** Conditions in the student's home may be related to behavior problems. Student behavior problems may be associated with a lack of adequate clothing or housing, parental supervision and types of discipline, home routines, or significant events such as divorce or the death of a friend or relative. Factors in the community or in society also may contribute to student behavior problems. There has been considerable

### VOICES FROM THE CLASSROOM Hidden Causes of Misbehavior

**Kurt Graber, high school science teacher, Dallas, Texas**

Some of our students have challenging and even turbulent lives. It can be both emotionally and physiologically difficult for them to achieve a state of readiness to learn when they arrive in our classrooms. We may see the negative classroom behaviors, but we sometimes do not see the causes of their misbehavior. When we are able to identify the cause of the misbehavior, we are sometimes more able to help them.

For example, Johnny was provoking a fight with nearly everyone in class one morning. We didn't know until later that, once again, Johnny had been slapped around in the school parking lot by his stepfather. In class, we only saw his fighting and didn't realize he was in pain and distress.

Sharona came to class nearly every day with a wide array of new and highly fashionable cosmetics—lip gloss, foundation, makeup, eyeliner, and even some lotion for the boys. She had it all. Her show-and-tell in the opening minutes of each day led to some disruption. We later learned that she hails from a small Latin American country and that she is somewhat insecure about herself. She used the cosmetics as a way to gain approval from her peers. For our science fair, I fortunately was able to guide her to do a project about making lipstick, and this earned her quite a bit of admiration and popularity in a constructive way.

concern and debate over the effects of television on the beliefs and conduct of children. Violence on television is seen by some to influence students to be more aggressive.

5. **The physical environment.** The physical arrangement of the classroom, temperature, noise, and lighting may affect student behavior. Student crowding may also be involved. These factors may contribute to a student's lack of commitment to a lesson and may lead to inattention and misbehavior.
6. **Poor behavior decisions by students.** The classroom is a complex environment for students as well as for teachers. Students are confronted with challenges, temptations, and circumstances that will cause them to make decisions about their own behavior. Their own personalities and habits come into play here. Given all of these factors, students will sometimes make poor decisions that lead to misbehavior.
7. **Other students in the classroom.** Some misbehavior results from students being provoked by other students in the classroom. A student may be drawn into an incident of misbehavior when another student does something inappropriate. In addition, peer pressure from other students may cause individual students to misbehave in ways they would not consider by themselves.
8. **Teacher factors when managing the class.** Teachers sometimes needlessly create disciplinary problems by the way they manage and conduct their classes. Inappropriate teacher behaviors include being overly negative, maintaining an authoritarian climate, overreacting to situations, using mass punishment for all students, blaming students, lacking a clear instructional goal, repeating or reviewing already learned material, pausing too long during instruction, dealing with one student at length, and lacking recognition of student ability levels. Although few teachers can avoid all of these behaviors all of the time, effective teachers recognize the potentially damaging effects of classroom order and discipline. Being aware of these characteristics is the first step to avoiding them. It is useful periodically to reflect on your own teaching behavior to determine if you are taking actions that are contributing to inattention or misbehavior.
9. **Teacher factors concerning instruction.** Teachers make many decisions about the content and delivery of instruction. Students may lose interest in a lesson if the teacher presents uninteresting lessons, does not plan meaningful activities or engage students in the lessons, is ineffective in instructional delivery, or does not deliberately plan to incorporate motivational elements into the instruction. When students lose interest in a lesson, they are more likely to get off task and misbehave.

## Degrees of Severity

Misbehavior ranges from mildly to severely disruptive behavior. Severely disruptive behavior and crime in schools may involve violence, vandalism, coercion, robbery, theft, and drug use. These behaviors typically occur outside the classroom in places such as the lunchroom, corridors, or outside the building. Moderate levels of misbehavior involve tardiness, cutting class, talking, calling out answers in class, mild forms of verbal and physical aggression, inattentiveness, and

### ■ WHAT WOULD YOU DECIDE? Dealing with a Sleepy Student

You have a student in your classroom who has difficulty paying attention in class and appears to be sleepy much of the time. Once during a classroom film, the student fell asleep. Many days she does not complete her class work or homework.

1. What might be some reasons for the student's sleepiness and lack of attention in class?
2. What might you do to identify the actual cause of the sleepiness and inattention?

## ■ CLASSROOM CASE STUDY Analyzing a Teacher's Classroom Management

Jasmine Nichols is an experienced third-grade teacher in an urban school district. Misbehavior is rare in her classroom because she creates a secure environment that fosters mutual respect. Ms. Nichols and her students generate the classroom rules and their consequences during the first class session of the school year. Each student is asked to sign a copy of the rules and consequences, verifying his or her commitment to them and assuming responsibility for his or her own behavior. The rules and expectations are then posted in the classroom.

Ms. Nichols also gives thought to the classroom arrangement to eliminate distractions for her students. Students' desks are located at a reasonable distance from pencil sharpeners, trash cans, and other such distractions. Infrequently used items are out of the way in a nearby supply closet. Ms. Nichols often moves around the room and monitors her students to be sure they are on task.

At the start of the year, Ms. Nichols plans for activities to help students get to know each other. She becomes aware of

the students' interests and needs and takes that information into consideration when planning lessons. She also uses a variety of instructional approaches and always tries to promote active student involvement. She takes steps to monitor student conduct and reinforce appropriate behavior consistent with academic goals. When any student gets off task or misbehaves, however, Ms. Nichols responds promptly with actions that are part of her predetermined discipline plan. Furthermore, she communicates with families regularly about academic and behavioral issues.

### *Focus Questions*

1. Identify the *classroom management* variables that Ms. Nichols addresses to promote and maintain appropriate behavior.
2. Identify the *instructional* variables that Ms. Nichols addresses to promote and academic achievement.
3. What steps did she take to develop a positive classroom community and to promote a caring classroom?

failure to bring supplies and books. Most misbehavior is comparatively mild and is related to attention, crowd control, and getting work accomplished in the classroom.

When selecting an appropriate response to misbehavior, it is important that you take into account the degree of severity of the misbehavior. You can evaluate severity by factors such as appropriateness, magnitude, intent, and extent to which a behavior differs from what is expected in a particular setting. The degree of your response should match the degree of severity of the misbehavior. Teachers often ignore certain minor misbehaviors because their intervention may be more disruptive than the misbehavior.

## Principles for Working with Students and Preventing Misbehavior

Problem behaviors have a variety of causes, and evidence suggests that some factors are within the school and classroom environment (Charles, 2014). To promote classrooms that are conducive to learning and to help prevent problem behaviors, teachers must address certain contextual factors within the classroom. *The Handbook of Classroom Management* (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006) reviews research, practice, and contemporary issues and provides considerable guidance for classroom practice. Here are some basic principles for working with students in a manner that establishes a positive, productive classroom in which students learn and have a satisfying educational experience:

- 1. Maintain focus on your major task in teaching.** Your major task is to help students be successful in achieving educational objectives, to promote student learning, and to help students develop the knowledge and skills to be successful in your classroom and beyond.
- 2. Understand your students' needs and how to meet them.** Know your students' likes and dislikes, what motivates them, their needs and desires, and what influences their lives. Use that information to create an appropriate learning environment.

3. **Understand and respect ethnic or cultural differences.** Teachers are more prepared to facilitate learning and guide behavior when they understand the ethnic or cultural background of their students.
4. **Know what causes misbehavior and how to deal with those causes.** Take steps to reduce or remove the causes of misbehavior.
5. **Provide clear rules and procedures to guide student conduct.** Rules and procedures need to be clearly identified and taught so students understand the behavioral expectations.
6. **Have a specific plan for responding to misbehavior with a hierarchy of interventions.** Have a specific set of strategies to stop the misbehavior, keep students positively on track, and preserve good relations.
7. **Reduce the use of punitive methods of control.** Coercive or punitive environments may promote antisocial behavior. Other techniques that involve the students in creating a positive learning environment are more desirable.
8. **Take actions to establish a cooperative, responsible classroom.** Use techniques to maintain attention and involvement, reinforce desired behaviors, promote student accountability and responsibility, and create a positive learning community.
9. **Involve students meaningfully in making decisions.** Decisions can involve things such as the selection of classroom rules and procedures, instructional activities and assessments, and curriculum materials. Student involvement generates commitment to the learning process and to the classroom environment.
10. **Teach critical social skills.** Many students lack the social skills necessary to relate positively to peers and to do well academically. Teachers who help students develop these social skills help promote learning and successful classroom discipline.
11. **Involve parents and guardians to a reasonable degree.** Communicate with the parents regularly about what you are doing in the classroom and about the progress of their children. Make it clear that you want and need their support.

## MAJOR CONCEPTS

1. Classroom management involves teacher actions to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
2. Effective teaching is related to a teacher's ability to use appropriate management strategies while simultaneously providing high-quality instruction.
3. Classroom management variables and instructional variables promote positive behavior and academic gains.
4. Students and teachers have different perceptions about classroom management. Implications for teachers include the need to put effort into creating positive relationships with students, developing reasonable rules and procedures, and recognizing the relationship between classroom management and instruction.
5. Caring relationships in the classroom help support instruction and classroom management.
6. There are several areas of responsibility in classroom management and discipline (see Table 1.1).
7. A learning community is designed to help all students feel safe, respected, and valued in order to learn new skills. Characteristics of a learning community include security, open communication, mutual liking, shared goals or objectives, and connectedness and trust.
8. Order means that students are following the actions necessary for a particular classroom event to be successful; students are focused on the instructional tasks and are not misbehaving.
9. Misbehavior includes behaviors that interfere with the act of teaching, interfere with the rights of others to learn, are psychologically or physically unsafe, or destroy property.
10. Off-task behavior includes student actions that are not focused on the instructional activities, yet are not considered disruptive or defined as misbehavior.
11. Misbehavior ranges from mildly to severely disruptive behavior.

## DISCUSSION/REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

1. Recall your schooling experiences and describe examples where your teacher created caring relationships in the classroom. What did the teacher do to create the caring relationships between the teacher and student, and between students? Also recall negative examples.
2. When considering student perceptions of what constitutes good teaching, what are the classroom management and instructional implications for teachers?
3. Of the seven areas of responsibility in classroom management (see Table 1.1), which are the three most important from your perspective? Why?
4. How would you describe a positive learning community? Identify some examples from your own schooling experience.
5. Give some examples of off-task behaviors and misbehaviors. Clarify the difference.
6. Why is it important to know the cause of the student's misbehavior?
7. What are some benefits and disadvantages of involving students in making decisions about issues such as the selection of rules and procedures, instructional activities and assessments, and curriculum materials?

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Make a plan of specific activities and other actions that you would take at the start of the school year to help your students feel comfortable with each other in the classroom (e.g., group-building activities, opportunities to share personal experiences and interests, and promoting teamwork).
2. One aspect of a learning community is having shared goals or objectives. Think of a unit you might teach and identify five ways that you could build shared goals into your plans.
3. Talk to several teachers to see what they consider to be mild, moderate, and severe misbehavior. Ask how they respond to the misbehavior at each level. Ask if they have a systematic plan to address misbehavior.

## FURTHER READING

- Charney, R. S. (2002). *Teaching children to care: Classroom management for ethical and academic growth, K–8* (Rev. ed.). Turners Falls, MA: Center for Responsive Schools.  
Provides substantial ideas for building a learning community, making the community work, using teachers' voices to promote and maintain community, and addressing difficult classroom behaviors.
- Levine, D. A. (2003). *Building classroom communities: Strategies for developing a culture of caring*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.  
Describes ways to create a classroom where students feel a sense of belonging. Includes creating emotionally safe classrooms, encouraging honor and respect, facilitating interdependence and generosity, and teaching empathy.
- Lundy, K. G., & Swartz, L. (2011). *Creating caring classrooms: How to encourage students to communicate, create, and be compassionate of others*. Markham, Ontario, Canada: Pembroke Publishers. (Distributed in the U.S. by Stenhouse Publishers.)  
Describes ways to build community, communication, collaboration, and compassion in the classroom.
- Sapon-Shevin, M. (2007). *Widening the circle: The power of inclusive classrooms*. Boston: Beacon Press.  
Ten lessons from inclusive classrooms are identified, and ways to build inclusive classrooms are described to promote social justice and promote student learning.
- Sapon-Shevin, M. (2010). *Because we can change the world: A practical guide to building cooperative, inclusive classroom communities* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.  
Discusses techniques to develop a cohesive classroom community in pre-K through middle-school classrooms. Emphasizes creating a caring, supportive classroom.

