Indicator: Students raise hands or otherwise signal before speaking. (159)

Explanation: The evidence review confirms that the most influential variable to affect learning is classroom management. Student needs or “calls” impact a teacher’s ability to successfully develop and manage an optimum learning culture. Developing a clear system to address student needs assists in maintaining a well-managed classroom.

Questions: How will the Leadership Team determine that teachers have developed and implemented a clear system for student calls? What types of strategies or aids do teachers use to manage individual student questions/calls and needs? How successful have the strategies and/or aids developed to manage individual needs been in terms of increasing student responsibility and ownership for their learning as well as reducing management stress for the teacher?

A meta-analysis of 28 factors that affect school learning (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993) found that the single most powerful factor is classroom management – the way the teacher organizes and manages the complex variables of curriculum, time, space, and interaction with students. Classroom management is evidenced in the teacher’s “withitness,” the learner’s accountability for learning, the clear procedures in the classroom, and the way the teacher mixes whole-class instruction, small-group instruction, and individual instruction.

Consistent reinforcement of classroom rules and procedures is key to classroom management (Emmer et al., 1984; Evertson et al., 1984). Rules and procedures are posted in the classroom, and students are reminded of them and learn to operate according to them. The effective teacher “teaches” classroom procedures in a positive way rather than relying solely on correction of violations. Frequently resorting to correction and punishment is a sign of inadequate classroom management methods, but consistent enforcement of rules and procedures is a necessity (Stage & Quiroz, 1997).

Teacher “withitness” is described by Brophy (1996) as the teacher being “aware of what is happening in all parts of the classroom at all times…by continuously scanning the classroom, even when working with small groups or individuals. Also [the teacher demonstrates]…this withitness by intervening promptly and accurately when inappropriate behavior threatens to become disruptive” (p. 11). The way a teacher plans, organizes, manages, and watches over the classroom determines the prevailing “culture.” Students adopt the ethos of the classroom culture, responding to what the teacher has created and to the way the teacher behaves.

Source: Sam Redding (2007), Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement

Example:
Teacher Calls

Purpose
- To manage student requests for individual assistance

Teacher Calls
- Reduce demands on teacher time for management purposes
- Promote student responsibility
- Increase efficiency of instructional delivery
- Ease the flow of activities in the classroom
- Enable students to request assistance without interrupting the teacher and to continue working while waiting for help (students should NOT hold up teacher calls)
- Can signal the maximum number of students the area can accommodate (to manage overcrowding)
• Are not practical for whole-group instruction
• Are great while teacher is working with small groups
• Are great while students are working in centers or on Student Learning Plan tasks

Should be
• Sturdy
• Brightly colored
• Placed in each work station or center and where students can get them when in independent work

Source: ADI, Teacher’s Manual for Alliance for Achievement

Linsin (2010) states that calling out is a momentum killer of the highest order, and can turn a well-planned lesson into a stop-and-start mess. Other reasons to require students to raise their hands include:

• Calling out is unfair (every student has a right to participate, not just those who are more assertive);
• Calling out inhibits learning (good teaching allows students to form their own ideas, opinions, and conclusions before an answer is revealed or a thought expressed, so students need time—even if it’s just a few seconds—to puzzle over the presented material before discussion takes place—and calling out interferes with this process);
• Calling out tilts the playing field (with socially confident students having an unfair advantage, shy or less confident students are left feeling unwelcome and disconnected from the rest of the class); and
• Calling out is rude (it encourages kids to think, “If I want something in this class, I’m going to have to bully my way to the front because that’s what everyone else is doing” – commonly leading to rudeness, unhappiness, and misbehavior).

As far as teaching students to raise their hands, Linsin (2010) insists: Requiring students to raise their hand before speaking is a must. Being aware that many teachers struggle to get students to do so consistently, he suggests:

• Model (your students need to know exactly what you expect from them, and the most effective way to do this is to sit in a student’s chair and show them precisely how you want them to raise their hand);
• Use the “how not” strategy (show your students how not to raise their hand; by acting out common unacceptable behaviors, such as waving your hand to get the teacher’s attention, calling out with your hand up, sighing and drawing attention to yourself, beginning to speak before the teacher actually addresses you; students need to be clear about what hand raising does and doesn’t look like);
• Practice (have students demonstrate what proper hand raising looks like; have them practice by asking you questions about your favorite sport or hobby, or by offering information about their own);
• Limit (students need plenty of opportunities to ask questions and share their thoughts, but there are times when the classroom needs to be closed for discussion – for example, the teacher might say, “We’re going to start independent reading in a few minutes, so are there any questions… about anything? – Now is a good time to ask because, once we begin reading, you’ll have to hold your questions or comments until we’re finished.”)
• Ignore (if a student calls out and waves their hand at you, first ignore them, sending the message that you don’t respond to anything except proper hand raising);
• Enforce (continue to ignore, but move over to the whiteboard and put the student’s name up, or whatever you do to communicate a consequence: hand raising should be an enforceable rule).

Linsin (2010) points to the one exception: the only exception to the hand-raising rule is when you’re working with a small group of students. Guided reading or literature circles should allow for polite but free-flowing conversation.

Teach For America (2011) spells out sample strategies for your classroom, including: During a lecture or demonstration, if students have a question or if you ask them a question, students will raise their hands and wait to be called on unless otherwise instructed. During a class discussion, students will raise their hands and wait to be called on before speaking. They will remember to use respectful language according to classroom rules and will use accountable language when sharing their opinions and thoughts. Depending upon your grade level, you might not require students to raise their hands to participate in a class discussion. During independent work, students will work quietly by themselves unless otherwise instructed. If students have a question about the independent work, they are allowed to ask their neighbor in a 3-inch voice before raising their hand to ask the teacher.

Linsin (2009) has some pointed tips on how to handle a talkative student. He points out, talking without permission wastes time, interrupts the learning of others, and leads to more serious disruptive behavior. “Allowing students to freely talk without permission is like driving an old jalopy; progress only comes in fits and starts, and you’ll never reach top speed. Besides being a classroom management nightmare and slamming the brakes on learning, talking without permission is remarkably rude. It’s akin to cutting in front of the line at a sold-out movie. With 20 to 30 or more students in a classroom, asking students to raise their hands is the only way to ensure fairness. Every student has the right to participate and all should have equal access to the discussion – not just those who are more outgoing, aggressive, or obnoxious. The same is true for side-talking during lessons or during independent work. It interferes with the learning of those within earshot and is therefore patently, and grossly, unfair.”

According to Linsin (2009), every year he overhears teachers complaining about their talkative classrooms, as if they have nothing to do with it. The fact is, the teacher decides when, how much, and how often the students are allowed to talk. After all, the teacher is in charge, not the students. He says the most effective way to handle a student who calls out without raising their hand, or two students talking during independent work time, is to enforce a consequence. “If hand raising isn’t a classroom rule, I recommend including it. If it’s already part of your classroom management plan, then it should be enforced like any other rule.” He claims too many teachers feel they’ll be disliked if they strictly follow such ticky-tacky rules, while the opposite is true: students will love you for it because it reassures them that they are equal members of your classroom, free to join in the learning process. It also provides a model for how to behave when working together in groups without a teacher present. It’s important that your students understand why hand-raising is important. So be direct. Tell them that calling out and side-talking is rude and disrespectful to the class, and that it is your job to protect their right to learn without interference. Teach your students how to take turns talking and include hand-raising as part of your classroom management plan. And if you want your classroom to run well, then enforce a consequence every time a student breaks a rule.

If a student keeps interrupting, Linsin (2011) suggests “You can most definitely do something about it, and while you’re at it increase the learning in your classroom tenfold. Here’s how:

• Be specific (it may sound strange, but it’s important to define for your students what interrupting is – because, believe it or not, more than a few won’t know; give examples using the specific interrupting behaviors you’re seeing in your classroom);
• Explain why (simply and directly explain why it’s wrong to interrupt, why it’s disruptive to learning, and why it isn’t allowed in your classroom; knowing the why of your expectations will always result in better buy-in from students);

• Role-play interrupting behaviors (sit in a student’s chair and play the part of an interrupting student; choose a student volunteer to play you teaching a lesson, then run through a few scenarios, showing the absurdity of interrupting, calling out, and approaching the teacher without permission [Note: If your students are laughing, then you know you’re doing it right]);

• Model what to do instead (now show your students the required alternatives to interrupting; show them the ease of raising one’s hand, the politeness of waiting patiently for you, and how much more peaceful and conducive to learning it is without interruptions);

• Reward those who do it right (no, you’re not going to give out prizes to students who don’t interrupt; what you will do is respond quickly to those who raise their hand and wait to be called on [Note: This sends a clear message to students that raising your hand and waiting patiently is the fastest way to get noticed]);

• Don’t respond to those who interrupt (if a student interrupts, calls out, or stands in front of you repeating your name, don’t respond – every time you do, you create an avalanche of more of the same behavior);

• Enforce a consequence (instead of responding to interruptions, or even reminding students to raise their hand, look them in the eye and say, “You have a warning” or whatever consequence your classroom management plan calls for);

• Interrupting Is Unfair (make the students see that interrupting is like cutting in line – it isn’t fair – yet many teachers encourage such impolite and disruptive behavior by answering and responding to interruptions, which is the same as giving your stamp of approval);

• This leaves the quiet, the shy, and the polite on the sidelines, while opening the floodgates to everyone else (you often hear the complaint, “My students are so needy. They just crave my attention” – no, they don’t; what they crave and what they need is a way to ask a question or voice a concern without having to fight, scratch, or compete with their classmates – so give them that way!

Follow the guidelines above and give all your students equal access to you, and by extension, equal access to their education.

Linsin (2011) recommends: “On the first day of class, explain what you see as valuable about class participation. Indicate that you want to do all you can to ensure that the classroom dynamics and activities support full participation, including calling on students who do not raise their hands and sometimes asking frequent contributors to allow others to have a chance. Ask students to inform you if you can make any changes to improve the classroom dynamics and rates of participation.”

The Teaching Center (2013) holds, “Ideally, the goal of increasing participation is not to have every student participate in the same way or at the same rate. Instead, it is to create an environment in which all participants have the opportunity to learn and in which the class explores issues and ideas in depth, from a variety of viewpoints. Some students will raise their voices more than others; this variation is a result of differences in learning preferences as well as differences in personalities. For example, some students who do not speak often in class are reflective learners, who typically develop ideas and questions in their minds before speaking; others are shy students who feel uncomfortable speaking in front of groups (at least initially). Many students who frequently volunteer to contribute are active learners, who typically think while they speak. The instructor’s goal is to create conditions that enable students of various learning preferences and personalities to contribute. To reach this goal, you will need to take extra steps...
to encourage quiet students to speak up and, occasionally, ask the more verbose students to hold back from commenting in order to give others a chance."

References and Resources:
The Teaching Center. (2013). Retrieved from http://teachingcenter.wustl.edu/strategies/Pages/increasing-participation.aspx#.VHzXHUoo671