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

**Explanation:** The research evidence clearly shows that well-managed classrooms are critical for effective teaching and learning. Insisting that students raise their hands or use some other signal before calling out is an essential classroom management technique within an optimum learning environment. Teachers should develop a system to teach students how to raise their hands when responding or asking questions in ways that respect all students’ rights to participate and maintain lesson flow, and enforce these rules by administering appropriate consequences.

**Questions:** How does the Leadership Team determine that teachers have developed and implemented a system to manage student hand-raising? What types of strategies or aids do teachers use to encourage and manage appropriate student hand-raising? How can teachers struggling with interruptions and disruptive behaviors be helped to implement more effective practices? Can these teachers observe others who are using effective strategies?

Classroom management has been defined as “actions taken to create and maintain a learning environment conducive to successful instruction (arranging the physical environment, establishing rules and procedures, maintaining students’ attention to lessons and engagement in activities)” (Brophy, 2006, p. 17). Research consistently shows that effective teaching and learning require a well-managed classroom (Jones & Jones, 2012; Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). For example, a meta-analysis conducted by Marzano, et al (2003) revealed strong effect sizes for effective use of classroom rules and procedures, teacher-student relationships, and disciplinary procedures. A recent meta-analysis addressed research in modern elementary classrooms conducted between 2003 and 2013 and confirmed the positive effects of classroom management interventions on elementary students’ outcomes, particularly for those programs including a focus on students’ social-emotional development (Korpershoek, Harms, de Boer, van Kuijk, & Doolaard, 2016). Preventive classroom management strategies (e.g., teachers negotiating clear rules with students) have generally been shown as more effective than reactive strategies (e.g., punishment) (Marzano, et al., 2003); however, educators continue to rank disruptive behaviors and conduct issues as ongoing barriers to their teaching environment (Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008). One clearly important preventive strategy involves managing classroom participation and preventing interruptions by requiring students to raise their hand or otherwise signal when they wish to communicate with the teacher. This brief will review related strategies that can help teachers foster an orderly and positive learning environment by establishing expectations for how students should signal the teacher appropriately.

**How can teachers effectively encourage hand-raising or other signals before speaking?**

A What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) research report provides recommendations for reducing behavior problems in elementary classrooms, including providing a learning environment with classroom rules and procedures that inhibit problem behaviors (Epstein, Atkins, Cullinan, Kutash, & Weaver, 2008). Epstein, et al (2008) recommend that teachers “actively teach expectations for appropriate student behavior and corresponding classroom routines to students
at the beginning of the year and revisit them regularly, showing students clearly what to do and what not to do” (p. 24). Group contingency programs, in which teachers define clear behavior goals and students work in teams to sustain appropriate classroom behaviors (such as raising hands prior to speaking), have been shown to both prevent undesired behavior and help teachers intervene successfully when behavior problems occur (e.g., Kamps, et al., 2015; Leflot, vanLier, Ongenha, & Colpin, 2013; Maggin, Johnson, Chafouleas, Ruberto, & Berggren, 2012).

Children may struggle with the executive skills necessary to maintain impulse control, including raising their hand and waiting to be called on by the teacher (Jacob & Parkinson, 2015). Calling out without teacher prompting can turn a well-designed lesson into a chaotic and disruptive endeavor (Linsin, 2010). This behavior is also unfair to less assertive or socially confident students, can inhibit learning by not allowing for sufficient processing time, and encourages rude behavior. At the same time, effective instruction involves high levels of student engagement, and teachers must encourage students to respond to the curriculum in meaningful ways, including speaking out in class in productively and appropriately (Cooper & Scott, 2017). Linsin (2010) insists that requiring students to raise their hands or signal that they wish to speak is essential, and suggests that teachers:

- Model to demonstrate what is expected of students by, for example, sitting in a student’s chair and showing how precisely they should raise their hand;
- Use the “how not” strategy by showing students how not to raise their hand (e.g., acting out common unacceptable behaviors, such as hand waving to get a teacher’s attention, calling out while hand is raised, sighing and drawing attention, beginning to speak before teacher acknowledges the student);
- Practice by having students demonstrate proper hand raising;
- 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 (e.g., 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 all 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 this behavior will not be responded to); and,
- Enforce (continue to ignore, but move over to the whiteboard and put the student’s name up, or however the teacher typically communicates a consequence: hand raising should be an enforceable rule).

Linsin (2010) further suggests that the only exception to the hand-raising rule is when teachers are working with a small group of students. Guided reading or literature circles should allow for polite but free-flowing conversation. Teachers may wish to experiment with alternatives to hand-raising when questioning the whole class of students about what they have learned. For example, the use of response cards, in which students write brief responses to teacher questions, has been shown to increase student responding compared with hand-raising which tends to target only a few students (Parsonson, 2012).

References and resources


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