

Effective Teachers Work in Teams

The future of the arts depends on how we induct, not mentor, our next generation of new teachers into the profession. This is the Generation Y, born 1977 to 1986, with many already having started their careers as teachers. They are socially adept at working in groups or teams and are avid users of online social networking...What we need to teach the Y-generation of teachers is that the #1 problem in the classroom is not discipline; it is the lack of procedures and routines—the lack of a plan that organizes a classroom for academic success.

by Harry Wong,
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Whatever draws you to Las Vegas, you will see student art work in the form of giant murals as you pass through McCarran International Airport. One of these murals is the handiwork of Jeanne Bayless and her students. She recently organized and directed another mural project. This time, a 1,100 square foot mural was all done in less than nine hours. It went without an incident; no one fell off a ladder, no one slipped in paint and there were no cuts, bruises or broken bones. The mural depicted the works of Hokusai, Cassatt, Van Gogh, Cezanne and Matisse.

Her students can't wait to come back to art class

Jeanne Bayless does not have a class of her own. Rather, each K-6 class in the school rotates into her classroom, and she will see each class once a week for one hour. As each class enters, it's the same smooth operation. The students know which table to go to. They immediately organize the art supplies on the table, ready to work. There are masking tape lanes on the floor, with arrows indicating the flow of traffic.

At the end of the hour, student work is produced, and student success and achievement are evident. They leave happy and wanting to come back a week later—"Do we have to wait that long?" they say.

Before we share how Jeanne Bayless manages her classroom, it's important to understand her philosophy about educating creative students. She says, "I believe and know that creativity is enhanced by structure in the art room. My children are not frustrated by failure. Creativity is strengthened and fostered by employing the procedures and routines of a well organized classroom.

"Because the production of a piece of art is a process that is the result of organized purpose and intent, it must not be dismissed as uncreative and uninspired. It

has long been a mistaken idea held by some that students should be encouraged to do their own thing in art classes and that to bring structure to the art experience may stifle creativity.

"I believe and know that students actually have greater freedom to create when they have an organized and structured classroom and when they have a set of procedures and routines that helps them stay focused on the projects and activities at hand. Secure in practiced routines and knowledgeable of consistent expectations, the students can use the time saved not having to worry about or ask piecemeal 'housekeeping' type questions. The time and energy saved is evident especially in production activities



Students follow a smooth procedure in Jeanne Bayless' class. Directional information on the floor indicates the flow of traffic.

where every minute counts.

“Because the classroom is managed and structured, the child can work easily within consistent expectations, and he or she can use the creative potential that I know is surely there.”

Jeanne Bayless’ successes are the result of spending much time on establishing classroom procedures. Without the time spent on what seem to be minute details and practiced “dry-runs,” very little learning would take place. There would be no time to finish a project, the room would be a mess and the students would not be able to create anything original and unique to their personal development.

Students will succeed when they are provided with a consistent environment where simple, clear procedures are practiced and maintained. This is the atmosphere that encourages and supports the highest achievement in each and every student ... in each and every subject.

Jeanne Bayless’ students annually win major local and state awards in art competitions.

In addition to having a consistent environment in her classroom, she is a major team member at her school in helping to create school-wide procedures. Read the January 2002 article, “A Most Effective School,” on www.teachers.net and see how effective schools have a culture that sends a message to the students that they will be productive and successful.

She can quiet a band in three seconds

Rebecca (Becky) Hughes, a teacher-of-the-year, teaches band in a Wichita, Kansas, high school. She regularly takes her band to perform in various locations such as New York City, Washington (DC), Orlando, Dallas, Colorado Springs and San Antonio, as well as in Kansas. With a class size of 150 to 500, she can quiet a group of students with noisemakers in their hands in seconds, and without speaking or showing stress. With an understanding of procedures, band directors and effective teachers can bring a group of several hundred students to attention in seconds.

These are some of Becky Hughes’ classroom management procedures:

- Students are always greeted by the teacher at the door.
- New seating arrangements are posted outside the classroom door.
- Class time is never used to call roll.
- Each student is assigned a number that corresponds to his or her number in the grade book.
- Expectations are made clear from the beginning.
- The order of pieces to be rehearsed each day is posted on the board where students can see it upon arrival in class.
- A mailbox is located near the office door. When music needs to be copied, it is placed in the mailbox and the red flag is put up. Music is returned according to whose name is on the original being copied.
- A memo pad is kept by the teacher’s side during each class for making notes about things she needs to do after class that might otherwise be forgotten.
- Instead of using class time to sell necessary items such as reeds, pencils, valve oil, etc., students purchase items before or after class, or they speak to the class treasurer.
- Students know that when the teacher steps to the podium or music stand, they must become quiet and give their undivided attention.

- Good manners are an expectation.

Becky says, “People often ask how I can handle so many students. I tell them that my students know my procedures and expectations; thus, my job is do-able.” She continues, “I have great section leaders and drum majors in marching band that help out, and my upperclassmen do a great job of helping the freshmen learn the procedures of our class.”

Just as bands are a team, Becky and her colleagues work as a team. Becky says, “When we travel anywhere, no matter the size of the group, my students know exactly what are the procedures: help each other load and unload equipment, act responsibly and respectfully, follow all directions, be flexible in case of change of plans, clean the area(s) used, close bus windows, take care of trash on the bus and thank the bus driver and chaperones.”

Because the choir director is relatively new, Becky has made her band handbook available so that there are some department commonalities in expectations and procedures. Also, the fine arts department meets approximately two times a month to discuss how the department can better work and support each other.

The future of the arts

Whether it’s a dramatic or music performance, most everything in the arts is a group endeavor. Creating a mural or having an art festival is a team effort. Putting on a choral or instrumental performance achieves its highest ratings when the group works together and produces a unified result.

Likewise, the most effective teachers are those who work in grade levels or departments where the staff meets together regularly, analyzes student performance and shares information and strategies with each other for the benefit of the students. We are in education for the students, not ourselves.

The future of the arts depends on how we induct, not mentor, our next generation of new teachers into the profession. This is the Generation Y, born 1977 to 1986, with many already having started their careers as teachers. They are socially adept at working in groups or teams and are avid users of online social networking. A learning community is their forte, thus to work collaboratively in a group is second nature to them. With their ability to be great team players, the future looks extremely promising in their hands.

Surround Gen Y teachers with a community of creative thinkers and the solutions will abound everywhere. Professionals do not work alone; they work in teams. Collaboration is the most effective way for teachers to learn. When teachers meet in teams to focus on a problem, they become part of a team that will work with students who need their help.

Classroom management is universal

What we need to teach the Y-generation of teachers is that the #1 problem in the classroom is not discipline; it is the lack of procedures and routines—the lack of a plan that organizes a classroom for academic success. Regardless of the grade level or subject, effective teachers have a classroom management plan. They manage a classroom with procedures and routines.

Effective teachers are PROACTIVE. They know how to prevent problems and thus have a successful classroom and can go home at the end of the day happy with the knowledge that their students have learned. Ineffective teachers are REACTIVE. They react to every problem in the classroom; all caused by the lack of classroom management procedures.

Classroom management and discipline are not the same. Classroom management consists of the procedures that a teacher uses to organize and structure a classroom for instruction and learning. Ineffective teachers discipline a classroom with threats and punishments. Nothing academic is accomplished and no learning or performance results.

What Rosemary and I teach is not a theory, not a philosophy, and not an ideology. Our forte is classroom management and our approach is eminently pragmatic. These can be found in the books, DVDs, online course, and Internet articles we have generated. What we teach is what effective teachers do in the classroom to have a well-run classroom that oozes with academic success. We take what teachers do and, in turn, share it with the profession so that we can all grow by our mutual sharing.

For instance, Pam Ware is a Milken award-winning high school drama teacher in Gainesville, Georgia. She can be found on page 12 in *The First Days of School*. She produces and directs thirteen-yes, 13-shows each year. How does she do it?

*Harry K. Wong is a former high school teacher. He and his wife, Rosemary, are the authors of *The First Days of School* and they are new teacher advocates. Their work can be found at www.EffectiveTeaching.com and www.NewTeacher.com. For more information on Jeanne Bayless, please go to www.teachers.net, December 2001. An archive can be found at the end of any "Effective Teaching" article by Harry and Rosemary Wong. For more information on Becky Hughes, please go to www.teachers.net, November 2002.*

