



Strategies for Classroom Safety

Not only is it important to make sure students feel safe from real threats, like violence, bullying, and harassment, it is also important that they feel protected from things they might perceive as a threat, including things that remind them of scary or upsetting experiences. To learn well, students need to feel both physically and emotionally safe in their school. Listed below are specific strategies that can be used to help students feel safe in the classroom.



CLASSROOM RULES

Identifying and posting classroom rules about safety and respect can help establish community values and signal to all students that the classroom is a safe place, free from threats of bullying and violence.

CONSEQUENCES

As these rules are established, be sure to communicate consequences for rule violations and apply them consistently and equitably.

ALTERNATIVES TO AGGRESSION

For students who may be struggling, you can help identify alternatives to aggression, such as use of “I” statements, taking deep breaths, or walking away when angry.

INTERVENE EARLY

Intervene quickly if an aggressive or violent act occurs, and redirect students by assigning a preferred task or allowing the student to move to a quiet area.

SAFETY FROM BULLYING AND VIOLENCE

Intervening appropriately when bullying or violence occurs helps make students feel physically and emotionally safe in the classroom. It’s key to stop bullying immediately by blocking eye contact between the student and the bullies but waiting until tensions die down to sort out the facts. After describing what you heard or saw, make sure all students involved know that bullying is unacceptable and against the school/classroom rules. Offer support to the student being bullied, which may be later in private if the student is upset. It’s also important to be sure that you increase your supervision of all students to make sure the bullying doesn’t continue. When everyone involved has calmed down, there should be logical consequences directly connected to the offense. Follow up by notifying other staff who may come in contact with the students involved and detailing the incident to the student caregivers.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Use restorative practices – like circles and conferences – in the classroom. They can be used proactively to develop relationships and a sense of community but can also be used following incidents involving harm as a way of restoring relationships.

STRESS AND TRAUMA AWARENESS

It’s hard for a student to feel safe in a classroom or situation when they are regularly reminded of past events or traumas. These reminders take students back to the feelings they had during a trauma, can set off a domino effect of emotions, and make it difficult for the student to successfully continue in the learning environment. Because these reminders can range widely, from unexpected changes in daily routines to loud noises, it can be difficult to know what might negatively impact your students. Still, by building strong relationships with your students and creating a physical classroom space less likely to be upsetting, it is possible to make your classroom a place that feels safe and secure for all students

INCLUSIVE AND OPEN COMMUNICATION

Part of helping students feeling emotionally safe is using inclusive and open communication. Even if we don’t realize it, the language we use can sometimes make others feel like they don’t belong. When talking to students, try to avoid words that could mistakenly marginalize or make some feel excluded. The same is true of the language used in classroom imagery, including posters, materials, and books, which are all great opportunities to reach the diversity of students in your classroom.

SAFETY FROM ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES

It can also be important for students to feel safe from the sale or use of illegal substances while in school. One way you can help with this in the classroom is to encourage safe alternatives to drug use and recognize the successes your students have in these areas to further encourage positive choices over risky behaviors.

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