

Using What Works: Elementary School Classroom Management

reviewed by [Michelle Sobolak](#) – July 25, 2017

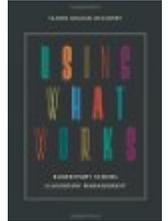
Title: Using What Works: Elementary School Classroom Management

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Teachers are leaving the profession at alarming rates of up to 50% within the first five years of teaching (Falk, 2012). This amount of teacher turnover can have very negative effects on students and school culture, often leaving schools and students with the greatest need with the least stable teaching force. Research indicates that one of the top reasons experienced teachers leave is student attitudes and behavior (Tye & O'Brien, 2002). Given that student attitudes and behavior greatly impact the decision to leave teaching, supporting teachers to develop positive student relationships and effective classroom management is pivotal.

Using What Works: Elementary Classroom Management's author, Sandee Graham McClowry, is a professor of counseling psychology, teaching, and learning at New York University, and she provides the reader with a guide to evidence-based classroom management. McClowry developed an evidenced-based management intervention system that she has studied through federally funded clinical trials. In addition, she lends her expertise as chair of the American Education Research Association's Classroom Management Special Interest Group.

The text focuses on effective classroom management strategies that can be implemented in any elementary classroom. The author discusses management from the standpoint of student-focused approaches that prevent distraction and challenges in the classroom. Novice teachers would benefit from the focus on developing effective classroom routines and relationships versus focusing on dealing with behavior challenges once they develop. Each chapter also provides descriptions of evidence based intervention tools and programs that fit the chapter topic, and which could be utilized to support work in that area. An abstract, results, and reference for supporting research are included in each strategy.

Chapter One defines classroom management and the evidence-based practice movement in education. The chapter highlights the value of implementing management tools and strategies that are research based. In addition, the chapter outlines the sequence that the text will follow to provide evidence-based management guidance to the reader. Chapter One begins the organizational pattern utilized throughout the text, providing a general chapter overview followed by a bulleted list of chapter goals. The chapter then unfolds with a discussion of each of the bulleted points followed by a summary, class discussion ideas, possible course assignments, and suggested related readings and websites. This format is supportive for the reader and provides a predictable text pattern.

Teacher-student relationships are the focus of Chapter Two. This is a pivotal topic when discussing classroom management and holds an important place as the second chapter and first technique discussed. The reader is guided through the importance of positive student relationships and the development of relationships with all students, especially students with insecure attachments with other adults in their lives. The crucial role that positive teacher relationships can play for temperamentally-challenging students is also explored.

Chapter Three highlights classroom organization that promotes effective classroom management. Three guiding principles of organization are included. The principles highlight the role of teacher planning and practice, maximizing resources and time organization to increase student engagement. The role of the RTI, three-tiered approach in relation to classroom management is explored to emphasize the unique nature and readiness of each child that enters a school classroom. Novice and in-service teachers stand to benefit from understanding how investing time into classroom and instructional organization can benefit the management of a classroom and also, importantly, the on-task behavior and learning of all students.

Inevitably, in all classrooms, there will be instances that require student discipline. Chapter Four focuses on effective and consistent discipline in a community of learners. The chapter first emphasizes the importance of developing a community of learners and explores how this can be accomplished in elementary classrooms. Classroom management is explored through ecological, behavioral, and social emotional lenses. Research is outlined that supports approaching management through social and emotional lenses. Student discipline through these lenses helps students develop into community members who recognize social cues, develop positive relationships and who learn to manage their emotions. The role of the teacher in developing a classroom that supports students in this endeavor, both by varying pacing and increasing engagement, is highlighted.

Chapter Five tackles the role of families and culture in classroom community and management. This is a vital topic for consideration, and McClowry tackles the topics of race, culture and the achievement gaps in American schools in this chapter. In addition, the author discusses immigrant children, the role of poverty and teacher bias and misconceptions. These are difficult yet fundamental topics for consideration in any discussion of education in America and certainly when considering classroom management. Novice and in-service teachers will grow from confronting the achievement gaps that are present in our schools and in considering how they can begin to ameliorate the educational inequities by incorporating culturally responsive teaching and valuing the diverse family backgrounds of students.

The final chapter, Chapter Six, focuses on students with special needs. This chapter provides definitions of common educational and special education acronyms. This information would be especially supportive to beginning teachers who are just entering the educational arena. McClowry notes that students who are identified as having special needs often require modified management techniques. The role of positive behavior support for all students, especially students with special needs, is highlighted and described in detail. The role of the team approach to working with students with particularly challenging needs is also discussed.

Using What Works: Elementary Classroom Management is a solid contribution to the discussion of elementary classroom management for novice and in-service teachers. McClowry expertly delves into the different aspects of management focusing on the role that teacher preparation, planning, organization and relationships play in managing a classroom. The book focuses on the prevention of student behavior issues versus dealing with issues once they arise. This is an important focus that will enable teachers to see that they play the key role in the management of the behaviors in their classroom. The author does not ignore the inadequacies in our educational system, and challenges teachers to consider how their own and society's biases may impact the classroom environment.

My one criticism of the text is that the evidence based management approaches presented throughout each chapter in tables are often programs that must be purchased. Purchasing classroom or school-wide programs is often outside the ability of classroom teachers. While the approaches support the chapter discussion and demonstrate that research has shown best practice, they likely would not be programs that a classroom teacher could implement without school or district financial and implementation support.

Given the number of teachers who are leaving the teaching profession and the role that student attitude and behavior can play in this decision, *Using What Works: Elementary Classroom Management* is a timely book that should find a place in teacher preparation, teacher training, and induction programs. McClowry provides a reader friendly text for teachers searching for best practice in developing classroom management that benefits student learning and development. In addition, further reading, websites, and discussion questions are presented for teachers who want to delve even deeper into this critical topic.

References

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