



Teacher Reflection and Action

Self-Management

Teacher Reflection: Settling Ourselves Is A Gift to Self and Others

Self-Management: being in control of our emotions and behaviors, accomplishing tasks, and succeeding in new and challenging situations.

A variety of sources cite this rather astounding number: teachers make around 1,500 educational decisions each day. That's an average of about three decisions every minute—decisions involving content, relationships, safety, strategy. Decisions about how to approach a concept, how to reframe an idea to make it more understandable, who to call on first, and who to remember to come back to for a private conversation. Teaching has been listed as second only to air traffic control in the number of crucial decisions made all day, every day.

Is it any wonder that one of the vitally important aspects of being a successful, effective, and happy teacher is the ability to manage one's emotions? To remain clear-headed and confident under the pressure of constant decision-making, teachers must be able to regulate themselves, to regain composure again and again, all day long.

Maintaining a positive, calm classroom climate is key to student learning. And the best way to help others feel calm and settled is to calm and settle ourselves.

As one classroom teacher with over twenty years of experience put it, "I have a responsibility to be happy in the classroom because I set the tone. I want the students to be emotionally present, so my job is to be emotionally present. I need to take care of myself in ways that contribute to me being able to show up in that way."

Complete the self assessment on page 3, then answer the reflection questions on the next page in your journal or with a trusted colleague.



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REVIEW

Look over your responses. Do you see any patterns? Which areas interest you as opportunities to strengthen for yourself? Are there Self-Management strategies you are using yourself, but are not yet being explicit about with students?

REFLECTION

Make a list of a variety of positive ways that you calm yourself during tiring or demanding situations, or use to balance yourself after. Examples: purposeful breathing, listening to music, exercise, laughter, nourishing food, talking to friends or loved ones, resting.

Notice: Which of these do you tend to use most often? Which would you like to use more? What would help you be more intentional about using self-care strategies to support healthy management of the stress inherent in teaching?

CONSIDER

Which of the strategies on your list are accessible to your students during their school day? How could you increase the opportunities your students have to replenish their positive energy throughout the day?



SELF ASSESSMENT

Professional Self-Management

Using a scale of 1 (Rarely) to 5 (Very Frequently), privately respond to the questions below. Allow yourself time to think about concrete examples that help you decide on your rating.

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. In pressured situations, I manage my emotions constructively (calm down, walk away, seek help). | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. I am able to manage my difficult emotions in the moment (self talk, deep breaths). | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. I model speaking from my own perspective in a clear and respectful manner. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. I am aware of and use a variety of coping strategies for handling stress and pressures like feeling isolated or frustrated. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. I am able to reframe difficult circumstances as learning experiences. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. I provide structured opportunities within the school day for my students to use self-monitoring strategies to regulate their emotions. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. I help my students identify and practice strategies for coping with and overcoming feelings of frustration, rejection, social isolation, and other forms of stress. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. I support my students in learning to reframe difficult circumstances to promote their resilience and optimism. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. My students have many opportunities each day to demonstrate respectfully presenting their own perspectives (“I-messages”). | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. I help my students understand how attitude plays a role in successful interactions and provide opportunities for them to apply that understanding during class time. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

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"Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them." -James Baldwin

Children learn from everything we do. They take in the words we say and compare them to what daily life with us is really like for them. As educators we hold incredible power over the climate of our classrooms. Being able to use that power to create and sustain positive experiences depends on our ability to manage our own emotions that will inevitably crop up during the course of our busy school life. Pausing to notice what we're feeling, and to remember what our fundamental goals are, can provide that vital moment of self-management that allows us to move forward in a way that is productive with students and that we feel good about.

It's vital that we are explicit and direct with students about our intentions related to the 'do-over' strategy. When they hear from their teacher, "When I ask you to do something again or try something again, I want you to understand that it's because I care about your idea. It's not an attack, it's because I'm interested in your thinking", students are more likely to be receptive and even appreciative of the opportunity for a 'do over.'" It sets students up for success when they know we care about them personally, as well as about how they affect the class dynamics.

TEACHER STRATEGY: The do-over

1. Make a list of ways in which your current students aren't meeting your expectations.

Think about your expectations related to how students interact with you, with one another, and with content.

2. Now rank your list items in order of which bother you the most. Which trigger disappointment, irritation, frustration, anger, or other emotions?

WATCH: Four-minute "Do-Over" video

As you watch, record: What are some important elements of the "do-over" strategy?

REFLECT: Trying the "do-over" strategy

Writing before talking helps to capture personal ideas before hearing someone else's. Respond to the questions below. Reflect on your writing privately or with a trusted colleague.

1. What are some benefits that might be gained from using the "do-over" method of intervening with students?

2. What are some things that might make it challenging for you personally to use the "do-over" strategy?



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ACT

Choose one of the potential challenges you foresaw when responding to Question 2 to actively address during the next week.

List two or three action steps you want to take that will support using the “do-over” strategy effectively.

Select a specific date on which you will reflect personally or with a partner about your progress with your action steps.

EXAMPLES OF CHALLENGES AND CORRESPONDING ACTION STEPS

CHALLENGE: “My students leave their materials scattered around the room, and I find that very frustrating.”

ACTION STEPS:

1. I will clarify how I want students to handle their materials.
2. I will (re)teach my expectations to my students.
3. I will use the “do-over” strategy to remind any students who continue to struggle with handling their materials in the designated way.

CHALLENGE: “I think the ‘do-over’ strategy would take too much time.”

ACTION STEPS:

1. I will intentionally use the “do-over” strategy for one week.
2. I will briefly make note of when I use the “do-over” strategy each day, including how much time it takes.
3. I will reflect on the impact of the time dedicated to using this strategy, as well as costs/benefits.

CHALLENGE: “I think it might be embarrassing to the student whose behavior I want to help change, to call them on it in front of others.”

ACTION STEPS:

1. I will make a list of aspects that I want to be sure are in place before I speak to the student, such as: “I will make sure to calm myself before speaking, if I am upset by the behavior.” “I want to be sure I’m using an even, matter-of-fact, and respectful tone of voice.”
2. I will think about how I want to approach the student, so they can tell I am coming from a place of honoring them and their ideas, while creating a safe climate for all.