

EDUCATOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

What Is Your Classroom Management Profile?

Classroom management style is not synonymous with personality. Although the former is certainly influenced by the latter, it is not governed by it.

Classroom management style relates to how a teacher manages student behavior, and it encompasses a wide range of approaches, from the authoritarian "dictator" to the permissive "hands-off" teacher. A "just right" authoritative approach is to be preferred in the majority of circumstances. Undoubtedly there will be times when a teacher needs to act the tough authoritarian, and there are times when a teacher can afford to be lenient, depending on the context. But a middle-of-the-road approach for most classroom situations combines the positive elements of both extremes, allowing teachers to simultaneously express care for students while holding them accountable for learning and appropriate social behavior.

What follows is an assessment tool for determining your own classroom management profile, developed by the Center for Adolescent Studies (Bosworth et al., 1996).

The Assessment

Directions. Respond to each of the 12 statements below based upon either actual or imagined classroom experience. Mark one response per statement. There are no right or wrong answers, so respond with the first reaction that feels true rather than the answer you think you should give.

STATEMENT	1 STRONGLY DISAGREE	2 DISAGREE	3 NEUTRAL	4 AGREE	5 STRONGLY AGREE
1 If a student is disruptive during class, I assign him or her to detention, without further discussion.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2 I don't want to impose any rules on my students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3 The classroom must be quiet in order for students to learn.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4 I am concerned about both what my students learn and how they learn.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5 If a student turns in a late homework assignment, it is not my problem.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6 I don't want to reprimand a student because it might hurt his or her feelings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7 Class preparation isn't worth the effort.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8 I always try to explain the reasons behind my rules and decisions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9 I will not accept excuses from a student who is tardy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10 The emotional well-being of my students is more important than classroom control.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11 My students understand that they can interrupt my lecture if they have a relevant question.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12 If a student requests a hall pass, I always honor the request.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Scoring Your Assessment

Add the response scores for the three statements listed under each style and record the total in the box below it.

Authoritarian Items 1 + 3 + 9 TOTAL	Authoritative Items 4 + 8 + 11 TOTAL	Laissez-faire Items 6 + 10 + 12 TOTAL	Indifferent Items 2 + 5 + 7 TOTAL
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Reading your results. Your score for each management style can range from 3 to 15. A high score indicates a strong preference for that particular style.

As you gain teaching experience, you may find that your preferred style or styles will change. Over time, your profile may become more diverse or more focused. It may also be suitable to rely upon a specific style when addressing a particular situation or subject. The intent of this exercise is to inform you and to arouse your curiosity regarding classroom management styles, not to label you.

The Four Profiles

Authoritarian

HIGH CONTROL, LOW CONNECTION

The authoritarian teacher places firm limits and controls on students. Students often have assigned seats for the entire term. Desks are usually in straight rows and there are no deviations. Students must be in their seats at the beginning of class, and they frequently remain there throughout the period. This teacher rarely gives hall passes or recognizes excused absences. The room is often quiet, and students know they should not interrupt the teacher. Because verbal exchange and discussion are discouraged, these students do not have the opportunity to learn or practice communication skills. This teacher prefers vigorous discipline and expects swift obedience. Failure to obey usually results in detention or a trip to the principal's office. In this classroom, students need to follow directions and not ask why. At the extreme, the authoritarian teacher gives no indication that he or she cares for the students.

Mr. Doe is a good example. His students receive praise and encouragement infrequently, if at all. He makes no effort to organize activities such as field trips, feeling that special events only distract students from learning. After all, Mr. Doe believes that students need only listen to his lecture to gain the necessary knowledge. Students in this class are likely to be reluctant to initiate activity because they feel powerless. Mr. Doe tells students what to do and when to do it, and he makes all classroom decisions. His style does little to increase achievement motivation or to encourage the setting of personal goals.

TYPICAL STUDENT COMMENT

"I don't really care for this teacher. He is really strict and doesn't seem to want to give his students a fair chance. He seems unfair, although that's just his way of getting his point across."

Authoritative

HIGH CONTROL, HIGH CONNECTION

The authoritative teacher places limits and controls on students but simultaneously encourages independence. This teacher often explains the reasons behind rules and decisions. If a student is disruptive, the teacher offers a polite but firm reprimand. This teacher sometimes metes out discipline, but only after careful consideration of the circumstances. The authoritative teacher is also open to considerable verbal interaction, including critical debate. Students know that they can interrupt the teacher if they have a relevant question or comment. This environment offers students the opportunity to learn and practice communication skills.

Ms. Smith exemplifies this style. She exhibits a warm and nurturing attitude toward students and expresses genuine interest and affection. Her classroom abounds with praise and encouragement. She often writes comments on homework and offers positive remarks to students. This teacher encourages self-reliant and socially competent behavior and fosters higher achievement motivation. Often she will guide students through a project rather than lead them.

TYPICAL STUDENT COMMENT

"I like this teacher. She is fair and understands that students can't be perfect. She is the kind of teacher you can talk to without being put down or feeling embarrassed."

Laissez-faire (Permissive)

LOW CONTROL, HIGH CONNECTION

The laissez-faire teacher places few demands or controls on students. "Do your own thing" describes this classroom. This teacher accepts students' impulses and actions and is less likely to monitor their behavior.

Mr. Jones uses a laissez-faire style. He strives not to hurt students' feelings and has difficulty saying "no" or enforcing rules. If a student disrupts the class, Mr. Jones may assume that he is not giving that student enough attention. When a student interrupts a lecture, he accepts the interruption with the belief that the student must surely have something valuable to add. When he does offer discipline, it is likely to be inconsistent. Mr. Jones is very involved with his students and cares for them very much. He is more concerned with their emotional well-being than with classroom control, and he sometimes bases classroom decisions on students' feelings rather than on their academic needs. Mr. Jones wants to be the students' friend and may even encourage contact outside the classroom. He has a difficult time establishing boundaries between his professional life and his personal life.

This overindulgent style is associated with a lack of social competence and self-control in students. It is difficult for students to learn socially acceptable behavior when the teacher is so permissive. With few demands placed upon them, these students frequently have lower motivation to achieve. Regardless, students often like this teacher.

TYPICAL STUDENT COMMENT

"This is a pretty popular teacher. You don't have to be serious throughout the class. But sometimes things get out of control and we learn nothing at all."

Indifferent

LOW CONTROL, LOW CONNECTION

The indifferent teacher is not very involved in the classroom. This teacher places few demands, if any, on students and appears generally uninterested. The indifferent teacher simply doesn't want to impose on students and often feels that class preparation is not worth the effort. Things like field trips and special projects are out of the question. Students learn only the most basic skills necessary. This teacher takes limited preparation time and often uses the same materials year after year. Classroom discipline is lacking, and this teacher may lack the skills, confidence, or courage to discipline students.

Students sense and reflect the teacher's indifferent attitude, and accordingly very little learning occurs. Everyone is just going through the motions and killing time. In this aloof environment, students have very few opportunities to observe or practice communication skills. With few demands placed on them and very little discipline, students have low achievement motivation and lack self-control. This teacher may lecture for the first twenty minutes of class. Sometimes a film or slideshow may be shown as a substitute for lecture, though never as an enhancement. If there is any time left, and there always is, students must study quietly and talk softly. As long as they don't bother the teacher, this teacher doesn't mind what they do. As far as this teacher is concerned, students are responsible for their own education.

TYPICAL STUDENT COMMENT

"This teacher can't control the class, and we never learn anything in there. There is hardly ever homework, and people rarely bring their books."

Perhaps the successful teacher is one who can evaluate a situation and then apply the appropriate style.

The classroom management profile scale was developed by Dr. Kris Bosworth, Center for Adolescent Studies (Bosworth et al., 1996). Reprinted with permission.

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