

Preventive Measures

Although it is important to teach classroom expectations, it is equally important to remember that few problems happen in organized and structured classrooms where students are kept busy with interesting work. There are many classroom circumstances that increase the likelihood of problems, including a boring curriculum, unclear expectations, or too much down time. Under such conditions, students will busy themselves by chatting, socializing, or engaging in more serious infractions.

One strategy to prevent problems is to ensure that the curriculum is meaningful and challenging. For example, the following activities occurred daily during Ms. McCann's seventh-grade science class. Each class began with a teacher lecture, followed by students reading a chapter in their textbooks and then answering the end-of-chapter questions. At the end of each class, students exchanged papers and graded each other's questions. Ms. McCann noticed that she was having a difficult time keeping her students engaged and working quietly. She decided to try some curriculum changes. The students were about to begin a unit on recycling. Rather than her typical format of chapter reading and question answering, she developed an activity for each lesson. The first lesson focused on identifying items that could be recycled. Prior to the lesson, she asked her students to make a list of 10 items in their household that could be recycled. At the beginning of class, she had students form small groups to compare their lists and categorize them (e.g., paper goods, plastic items). The students were instructed to use their books as a resource to make sure that the items could be recycled and that each item fell into the appropriate category. After this small-group activity, the students convened as a class and compiled a master list of recyclable items. The students were then provided phone books to locate a recycling facility in their neighborhood. Their homework assignment was to contact the facility to obtain information about its recycling practices. Ms. McCann found that her students' engagement and interest in classwork greatly increased when they worked on activities that had personal meaning to them. At the same time, she was able