Practice summary

Australian Education Research Organisation

Proactive and preventative classroom management approaches

November 2026

Proactive and preventative classroom management approaches help develop classroom conditions where students can focus, engage and thrive. Investing time and consistency in these practices results in less disruption and disengagement and more opportunities to support students' learning and emotional regulation.

This practice summary covers 9 strategies teachers can use to contribute to calm, learning-focused classrooms. Focusing on one area at a time and building confidence before moving on can make the process of developing effective practice more manageable.

This resource can be used individually to reflect on and refine your own practice or as a shared resource to support mentoring and a whole-school approach. It's designed to complement existing school and system policies, procedures and guidance.

Key points covered in this practice summary include:

- building positive relationships and learning environments
- teaching and reinforcing high expectations and routines
- being conscious of and adjusting for diverse needs
- responding early to disengaged and disruptive behaviours, and teaching students to self-regulate
- strengthening whole-school consistency.



For more in-depth information, including examples of how to apply the practices and case examples, see the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) comprehensive escalated behaviour and persistent disengaged and disruptive behaviour practice guides and the wider classroom management suite of resources.

1. Build relationships and engage with families

Strong relationships with students and their families enable you to understand each learner, identify emerging challenges early, and provide support that genuinely meets their needs.

Teachers can build these relationships by using respectful interactions in everyday moments, taking time to form positive teacher–student relationships and engaging with families as partners in learning.

2. Build and maintain high expectations, making reasonable adjustments when needed

Teachers should hold high expectations for their students' learning and behaviour. Students need varying levels of support to meet high expectations, and some may require different point-in-time expectations as they develop their skills.

3. Be intentional in developing a positive classroom culture

Being intentional about developing a positive classroom culture involves modelling, discussing, explicitly teaching, practising, revising and reinforcing expected safe, respectful, learning focused behaviours, routines and rules. This creates predictability, reduces anxiety and helps students understand what's expected of them.

4. Establish a culturally safe, inclusive and predictable learning environment

All students have the right to learn in safe environments where they can participate, feel valued and be recognised for their learning success. Developing learning environments where people from all backgrounds are valued and respected requires teachers to be reflexive and responsive to the needs of students.

5. Actively engage all students through high-quality instruction

High-quality instruction aligns with how students learn. When teaching is clear, well-sequenced and meaningfully connected to students' experiences, they are able to stay engaged and participate confidently in learning.

6. Use curriculum to teach emotional regulation and social skills



Students need explicit teaching of emotional regulation and social skills to learn how to manage their emotional and behavioural responses. Refer to the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education and Personal and Social capability to explicitly teach and support students in practising and using emotional regulation and social skills.

7. Support students' diverse needs



Students have diverse needs, including different communication needs, sensory differences and learning needs. Understanding and responding to these differences helps create inclusive classrooms where all students can thrive.

8. Foster students' understanding of each other's strengths and differences



A collaborative classroom culture where students understand and support each other's strengths and differences builds belonging and reduces isolation.

9. Respond effectively to low-level disengagement and disruption



Effective responses to low-level disengagement and disruption can help to prevent escalation and support students in refocusing on learning. Start with the least intrusive response and intensify as needed.

Implementing a whole-school approach

Individual classroom practice is strengthened when school leaders establish whole-school systems that provide shared expectations, consistent approaches, practical support and professional learning. This includes school leaders making sure teachers have the time, support and professional learning they need to use these approaches.

Monitoring and refining your practice

How you apply these approaches will depend on your professional judgement, your knowledge of individual students and the context of your classroom. There is no single right response.

To determine whether these approaches are working, consider how students are responding, including those with individual plans and goals.

Reflect on your practice:

- Are you using behavioural, academic, attendance and wellbeing data to identify patterns and reflect critically on your practice?
- Are you creating opportunities for honest feedback from students, families and colleagues?
- Are you engaging in professional learning to strengthen your classroom management skills?
- Are you examining your biases, assumptions and values and their impact on your teaching and relationships?

This practice summary is part of AERO's suite of classroom management resources and guidance for supporting students' diverse needs. It draws on content from the escalated behaviour and persistent disengaged and disruptive behaviour practice guides, which include detailed case examples and further guidance. For more information, visit edresearch.edu.au.



ISBN 978-1-923066-81-6 (online) | CC BY 4.0, excluding images: AERO

This publication was funded by the Australian Government Department of Education through the Engaged Classrooms Through Effective Classroom Management Program.