

Chapter 1: Introduction to Transformative Classroom Management

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If we had the ability to observe every classroom at once, we would see classroom management practices that varied greatly. What we would also see would be that these practices result in dramatically different kinds of classroom outcomes. Some classrooms that we observed would be peaceful places, where others would feel hostile and unsafe. Some classrooms would have very intentional and efficient climates, while others would be characterized by accidental climates. In some classes there would be a high level of engagement, while others would be filled with boredom.

Moreover, we would find classrooms in every kind of school – K-12, urban, suburban, rural, public or private that were functional and productive places and conversely those in every kind of school that were dysfunctional and unproductive. If we were to identify the variable in each class that was most responsible for the quality of the learning environment, we would find that it is us - the teacher. Our thoughts, values and actions will have the effect of defining the climate and experience in our class. Yet too few of us truly appreciate the powerful influence that we ultimately have - our classroom management choices can either:

- Promote community or fragmentation
- Lead to clarity or confusion
- Create a psychology of success or failure
- Be a liberating influence or perpetuate an unjust social class structure
- Foster a climate of motivation and joy or disinterest and drudgery

Moreover, our classroom management actions and attitudes can be the difference between our having either a sense of job satisfaction and a feeling that our gifts are being successfully utilized, or a feeling of burn-out and unhappiness. How we approach classroom management will significantly determine the degree to which we feel successful and satisfied with our teaching positions.

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of this book is to provide educators the tools to make their classrooms transformative places. The book takes a holistic approach to classroom management that includes an examination of each aspect on the classroom experience including the choices, actions and thinking of the teacher, the effects one's pedagogical choices play and the psychological effects of the practices being used on the students. Every teacher, given the tools, can have a transformative influence on their students. This book sets out to offer a blueprint for doing so.

Clarifying our Vision

Each of us possesses our personal vision of the ideal classroom. For most educators that vision is rather ambitious and was part of what inspired them to work with young people in the role of teachers, coaches, counselors, administrators, support staff, and paraprofessionals. Yet, when confronted over time with the realities of schools – the

motivational level of the students, the discouraging attitudes of their peers, the difficulty of the job-- many educators conclude that they have to relinquish their ideal vision and adopt one that forces them to make compromises they never wanted to make out of a need for survival and what seems to be practical necessity. And they find no shortage of encouragement from their peers for lowering their expectations of their students and themselves, losing their sense of possibility, and accepting the reality of the "real world."

This experience may seem not only discouraging, but common and unavoidable. However, the likelihood is that the vision of that ideal, joyful, productive classroom that your intuition told you could exist was rooted in something sound and authentic. And while the highly effective and ambitious classrooms do not represent the majority, they do exist, and they exist in every type of school, at every grade level, and with every type of student demographic. What you want to accomplish is possible. You *can* get there. There are answers and pathways to making your vision a reality.

Reader Note: Chapter Reflections will be included throughout each chapter. They are intended to provide the reader opportunities to reflect on the ideas presented in the text in relation to their own personal experience. Some readers may want to skip over the reflections on the first reading. This will be true if one is attempting to progress through the chapter at a quick pace. Alternatively, some readers will find that the chapter reflections provide a means by which the content in the chapter can be processed in a more practical and personal manner.

Chapter Reflection 1-a: What kinds of messages do you hear from experienced teachers and the public about what is possible in schools? Are they encouraging?

In most cases, while common sense and teaching experience are valuable, they alone are not sufficient in helping us succeed at translating our classroom management vision into a reality. Good intentions and common sense do not necessarily lead us to good practice. If they did we would see mostly excellent teaching and classrooms free of conflict and full of motivated students, wouldn't we? The actuality is that we do not. Likewise, experience does not necessarily lead to improved practice over time. If this were the case, we would observe that the most experienced teachers would be the most effective classroom managers. In some cases, this is true, and the value of experience cannot be underestimated; however, in many cases more experience simply leads to repeatedly applying the same flawed principles and practices day after day.

Moreover, adding isolated management strategies here and there may or may not result in improvements. We need to ask ourselves, "To what are we adding them?" Without a foundation that supports a positive strategy, the strategy itself may not bring about the positive effect that we desire, or even have a desirable effect at all. Having in place a sound set of guiding principles for our action and thinking is necessary for independent practices to be effective and function as part of an integrate whole. Furthermore, in most cases, our classroom management will be more positively affected by what we cease doing rather than something we add to our repertoire.

Developing a Guiding Personal Vision

So how do we begin the process of achieving our classroom management goals and making our vision a reality? Before we begin to adopt and/or apply more new practical strategies, it will be beneficial to take a few preliminary steps.

First, clarify your intention. What do you really want? When you reflect upon this question, it is useful not to let your thinking be overly restricted by what others tell you is possible, or not possible, or what you have become accustomed to through practice or observation. Allow yourself to conceive a vision that is guided as little as possible by fear and resignation and as much as possible by what you feel is right. What kind of classroom would make you proud and would give you a sense of being true to your core values? Second, be purposeful about raising your level of awareness. If you have not yet started teaching, you might want to observe a broad range of classes from a variety of different schools. It is common that teachers default to practices that they were exposed to themselves, so recognize that what you have seen to this point may have been a limited sample of what is possible. See what is out there. And if it you do not see your vision “operationalized” within the classrooms that you observe, it may mean that you are in the position of making a significant contribution as a trailblazer. If you are currently teaching, this book will offer many opportunities to reflect on what you are doing and why you are doing it. Exploring both internally and externally will be useful. More effective practice begins with a examination of who we are and what we value, followed by taking stock of what we are doing and asking ourselves if it is getting us closer to our vision or not. Third, we need to recognize that every practice has an effect. Every choice we make shapes our overall classroom climate. Even the smallest action on our part can have a profound impact on the behavior, motivation, and achievement of our students.

Chapter Reflection 1-b: Consider doing your own independent research in this area. Survey a few teachers’ level of job satisfaction and level of stress each day, and [include a question about] ask them how successful they feel in the area of classroom management. Do you find a relationship between the two?

The Natural Condition

The natural condition of our classroom is functional, harmonious, satisfying, and productive. This natural condition exists beneath the various sources of dysfunction in any classroom, and is most often masked by the effects of ineffective management practices and the negative student reactions that result from them. The problems in our class such as apathy, struggle, hostility, anxiety, inefficiency, and resistance, while common, are essentially unnatural conditions that are brought about by one or more dysfunctional ingredients brought into the class. In other words, they are normal, but not natural. The positive feelings that exist in our class such as the love of learning, desire to collaborate, experience of achievement, inspiration, joy of contributing and growth are all natural states. For some of us, this may seem an odd concept, and some of us may never ultimately sustain this natural state, but embracing this principle is fundamental to the process of developing a *transformative* vision.

Problems within any class should not be viewed, as some would suggest, as a finite quantity of misbehaviors that need to be “dealt with” or “handled.” Both functional and problematic/dysfunctional behaviors have explainable causes, and are in most cases related directly or indirectly to our actions. Each are manifestations of predictable factors including the interaction between teacher/school and student, the systems that have been put in place, congruence between the expectations of the students and ourselves, and the degree to which our class meets the students’ basic needs. Often,

clever strategies are helpful at reducing the degree to which there are problems, but in some cases they can disguise the true source of a problem, or worse yet, limit the growth of the students toward more evolved behavior.

This is not to suggest that teaching is naturally easy, or that an effort to create the natural condition will cause problems to disappear overnight. In most cases the process of creating this natural condition will be challenging and entail a great deal of commitment and effort. But the closer we get to it, the better our class will function, and the rewards that we will experience in the process of promoting it make the effort worthwhile.

Chapter Reflection 1-c: Have you ever been in a situation in which you felt that you were part of a natural learning condition? What was the context? How much of your formal education would you characterize as being “natural”?

In addition, we need to be wary of advice that include the term “it works.” The fact is that by definition everything “works.” Every good, bad and ugly practice that is being used by teachers today is said to “work.” But our question should not be “Does it work?” The question we need to ask is, “Is this practice getting me closer to my long-term management goals and vision?” In many cases, justifying a classroom management practice based on the rationale that “it works” is often a smoke screen for using an ultimately dysfunctional practice only because it is familiar or convenient. Many popular strategies have genial-sounding names such as token economy, praise, behavioral charts, reward systems and consequences, etc. However, as you will see throughout the course of this book, when we examine these practices more closely we will see that they have long-term effects that are seriously detrimental. We might ask ourselves whether we are looking for practices that will sweep problems under the rug, lead to domestication rather than growth, trick students temporarily or make us feel better or justified, or conversely do we want our management practices to have real long-lasting effects that change the lives of our students for the better?

Chapter Reflection 1-d: It may seem like the answer is obvious, but how would you answer the question “What does it mean when a classroom management practice ‘works’?” Was it more difficult to answer this question than you first thought? Why?

What is Transformative Classroom Management?

Transformative Classroom Management (TCM) is grounded in principles of growth and change. The Transformative classroom functions to transform those in it – as individuals and as a collective. TCM, unlike many other models, assumes that problems do not so much need to be “handled,” as it assumes that the sources of those problems need to be identified and altered. TCM does not propose strategies for how to conquer or domesticate one’s students, but strategies to create optimal conditions for learning, performance, motivation, and human growth. TCM is perpetually working toward a better tomorrow. Figure 1.A depicts the three domains of change within the TCM classroom. First, the Transformative Classroom supports each student’s individual progression from irresponsibility and a “failure psychological orientation” to self-responsibility and a “success psychology” (i.e., internal locus of control, sense of acceptance and belonging,

and mastery vs. helpless orientation). Second, the Transformative Classroom promotes the growth of the collective from its current state of function to one of greater function and ultimately into greater levels of community. Third, TCM endeavors to assist the teacher in his/her own growth toward greater levels of self-awareness, a more effective and intentional set of practices, and provides him/her with the tools to become a visionary leader in the classroom.

Figure 1.A: Depicting the Three Domains of Transformative Classroom Management and the Movement within Each

	Movement and Growth from _____ → to → _____
Student	Failure psychology → Success Psychology Irresponsible → Self-responsible Dysfunctional behavioral patterns → functional behavioral patterns
Class/Collective	Dysfunction → Function Independent Survival → a Connected Community Egocentric → Contributors Normal Condition → Natural Condition
Teacher	Reactive/Accidental → Intentional/Aware Short-term Survival → Long-term Vision Manager → Leader

Chapter Reflection 1.e: Have you ever been part of a *transformative context* (e.g., classroom, team, group, project, committee, etc)? If you have not, the notion of creating one in your classroom will seem somewhat abstract. But as you apply the principles and practices from the book, you will begin to better recognize what it is. If you have, what was your experience? Many of those who have tend to judge each successive context by that standard. This is very often true for students. Those who have been part of a *transformative classroom* are changed forever. Reflect on why this is the case. It likely has a great deal to do with the fact that the transformative classroom moves the group closer to the “natural condition.” Once a person has experience that environment, the not only want to experience it again, but they begin to align their actions with that condition whether they are in it or not.

Creating the transformative classroom will require us to learn to classify management practices into those that will lead to long-term change, movement and ultimately the “natural condition,” and those that will keep mired in perpetual dysfunction, even if they appear on the surface to be a useful idea in the short-term. Transformative practices are typically no more difficult than other practices, however, in some cases can seem counter to our assumptions. Therefore it will be helpful to examine not only the practices that we have observed or have used, but the assumptions that we use when we approach the idea of classroom management itself. For many of us our difficulty in creating the TCM classroom will come as a result of self-limited thinking that may seem natural but is often rooted in misconceptions, misinterpretations, old habits of thinking and/or the our limited exposure to transformative contexts. Figure 1.B outlines some of the differences between the assumptions of TCM and those approaches that are based to some extent on these types of self-limiting beliefs.

Figure 1.B : Comparison of the Principles of Transformative Classroom Management to those what might be characterized as defining more self-limiting approaches.

A transformative approach to classroom management assumes the following:	Self-limiting approaches to classroom management assume the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is possible to change the lives of our students for the better, and that is part of our job as teachers. • All areas of teaching are inter-connected (e.g., instruction, management, assessment and motivation, human development) • The teacher is the agent of change, and ultimately “makes the weather” in the class. • Teaching implies the undertaking of a journey of self-discovery, growth and improved performance, and therefore needs to be approached with a sense of moral purpose. • Teaching acts should be intended to have positive long-term effects, and management should be intended to focus more on how any intervention will affect the students in the future rather than only the present. • Negativity in any form has no value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student behavior should be managed for the purpose of sustaining the order in the class. Supporting the students’ human development is not part of the job of teaching. • Classroom management is simply a necessary inconvenience that is required to allow the class to get more done. • The students are the problem, and their current level of behavior will dictate the quality of the class. • The teacher is a practitioner who is responsible solely for getting their job done as defined by their contract. • Teaching acts should intend to accomplish coverage of materials as evidenced in the short-term, and management should succeed in fixing the problems for time being. • Negativity is just one of the many common states of mind and can be necessary for the teacher to use to send his/her message.

Chapter Reflection 1-f: As you reflect on the list of assumptions in Figure 1.A, do you find your current assumptions aligning more with one column than the other? You may want to revisit this exercise as you have read further in the book.

The Progression of the Book

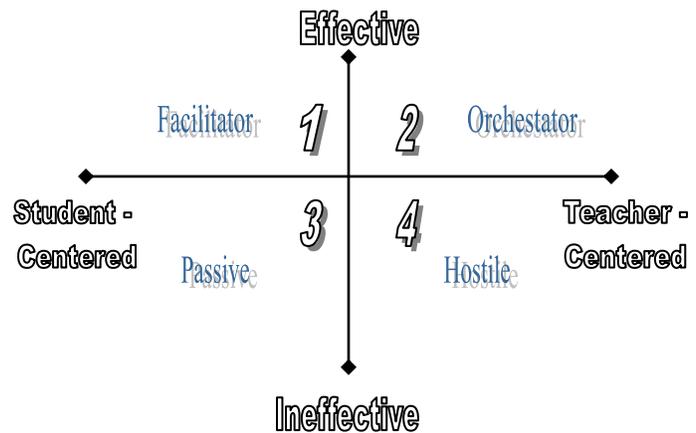
This book endeavors to offer a practical guide to helping teachers transform the conditions that are limiting the success and growth of their students and themselves and then set about to create the learning environment that they desire.

The progression of the book is designed to be developmental, and each chapter is inter-related. The sequence of content is intended to support the new teacher in the development of a personal classroom management plan, and the experienced teacher in

the process of the reforming and improving their classroom management practice. It begins with chapters intended to promote self-assessment and the development of a personal vision and set of intentions. It then offers a series of chapters that address essential elements of successful management including the practical steps in creating a democratic classroom. This is followed by chapters that specifically address what it takes to achieve the qualities of a transformational class.

In part one of the book: *Assessing Where We are and Raising Awareness*, we begin by examining the *Teaching Style Matrix* (see figure 1.B), and how one moves from practices characterized by the less effective lower quadrants to those in the more effective upper level. In this chapter, we examine the nature of the effective classroom and what types of practices lead to either function or dysfunction. Throughout the book the reader will be 1) encouraged to avoid practices characterized by either the 3- or 4-Style approach as defined by the matrix and 2) encouraged to compare the relative advantages of either the 2- or 1-Style approach when considering several of the ideas presented in the book.

Figure 1.B: Teaching Style Matrix



Next, in Chapter 3, the reader will be led through an examination of the implicit level of the overall classroom reality, including an examination of the idea that “we teach who we are.” This section encourages the reader to assess current practices and beliefs. In the process of improving our practice and changing unwanted patterns, the feeling of dissatisfaction can be a useful motivator. However, if we begin to try new strategies without understanding why we were initially attracted to the ineffective ones, we might find that we will unconsciously return to them under stress and when we are feeling less intentional in our efforts. So awareness of your attitudes, values and conditioning is an important early step in the growth process.

In Part Two: *Exploring the Nature of Classroom Dynamics and Student Motivation*, we begin with an examination of the power of “social/indirect learning” dynamics in Chapter 4, and how to harness its power to the advantage of our students and ourselves. Then, in Chapter 5, we will compare common strategies for developing clear and shared classroom expectations, examine which strategies will be more effective in this process, and consider why shared expectations are the cornerstone to successful classroom management. In Chapter 6, we address technical management – the strategies that promote a culture of listening and respect, and ensure 100% of our

students are attentive, on task, responsible, and our class functions efficiently on a practical level. In addition, this section includes an exploration of motivational strategies in Chapter 7, and how to create a “psychology of success” in our students in Chapter 8. We will explore how each teaching act either promotes or undermines our students’ psychological orientation to learning and achievement, and the practices that are likely to produce each result.

In Part Three: *Developing a Functional Democratic Classroom Society*, we explore how to create a functioning democratic classroom. At the heart of any functional class is a clear shared understanding, and a sense on the part of students that they are responsible for being accountable and contributing to the collective. Through the development of a shared social contract, clear expectations, a sense of purpose and a set of logical consequences, any class can achieve the experience of democracy. In Chapter 10 of the book, a clear distinction is made between punishments and logical consequences, and a process is outlined for developing logical and related consequences that will lead to more responsible student behavior and a stronger social contract. Chapter 11 outlines a system for implementing the social contract and promoting student responsibility – the key to a functioning democracy.

In Chapter 12 of Part Four: *Good Teaching Practices Lead to Good Management Outcomes*, we examine the connection between instruction, assessment, and classroom management. The starting point for this discussion is the idea that teachers who are more effective pedagogically will inherently have fewer problems. In this section, we examine the relationship between how we teach and how it effects our management. Also in this section, we will examine how instructional and managerial choices work to either reinforce or liberate the social class structure and the students within that structure. In Chapter 13, practical ideas for successfully leading and managing cooperative learning are presented.

In Part Five: *When We Need It: Remediation without Coercion*, we examine how to work with conflict and the “more difficult” students in Chapter 14. Conflict is a natural part of life in and out of the classroom and can be a source of growth or result in suffering. Some students will come to us with habits that will require a greater degree of intentional effort on our parts than others. In Chapter 15, we will examine how to bridge the gap with students who appear disconnected, and help students who have developed a pattern of negative identity learn to reform the processes they use to reach their goals and discover more healthy and functional behavior patterns.

In Part Six: *Adopting a Transformative Mindset*, we examine how to synthesize the strategies in the previous chapter into an approach for achieving the transformative classroom. In Chapter 16, we will explore how to successfully implement a student-centered 1-Style management approach and promote classroom community. Finally, Chapter 17 offers an in-depth exploration of the relationship between our thinking patterns and our effectiveness and job satisfaction. In many respects, the level of function or dysfunction in our classrooms will be a reflection of the thoughts, attitudes, patterns and beliefs we hold in our minds. Here we examine how to make our thinking an ally in the process of reaching our goals rather than a self-limiting hurdle.

Part Seven of this book included four chapters that supplement the previous 17, but may be more useful to some readers than others. Chapter 18 examines how to move from a management approach characterized by a less effective 4-Style approach to a more

effective 2-Style “conductor” approach. This chapter will be most useful to those teachers who hold the belief that the only way that they can succeed as a teacher is by dominating their students, yet are at least a little open to considering a new approach that does not leave them feeling perpetually negative and disappointed and helps alleviate the hostile climate within their classrooms. Chapter 19 offers insights into the area of classroom competition, and how it can be incorporated in a healthy manner. Chapter 20 examines the popular practice referred to as “behavior systems,” “colored card systems,” or a “putting names on the board” system. This chapter will be useful to those that may have adopted one of these systems and are interested in taking a closer look at the effect it may be having, and/or those that might be considering implementing such a system in the future. Chapter 21 offers a step-by-step system for assessing process and/or behavior. It explains why this practice needs to be done right, or not at all, and how it can be a useful asset for meeting the goals of the effective classroom.

Reader Note: Each chapter in the book will include end-of-the-chapter *Journal Reflections* and *Chapter Activities*. These are intended to help the reader and/or course instructor further process key ideas within the chapter. The journal process can be a valuable asset in processing one’s thinking more deeply. The chapter activities may be helpful to the reader to develop their own personal classroom management plan or teaching improvement plan.

Journal Reflections

1. In what ways has school had a transformational affect on your life? What events were responsible for that effect? Why?
2. What do you want to accomplish by reading this book?

Chapter Activities

1. Develop a personal vision for your ideal classroom. Make it entirely your own. Do not be too concerned--for now--about limitations that you feel are present in your school, or the kinds of schools in which you see yourself working. Paint a picture of how it looks and feels. What kind of work is going on? How does it feel in the class? What do teacher-student interactions look like? What is the climate in the room?
2. In a small group, discuss the contents of Table in Figure 1.A. Do you see evidence of a transformational mindset in schools in general? How do you explain your findings?