TAking Control of the Classroom

Background

A most often cited problem of beginning teachers is insufficient knowledge about classroom management. Thus, hundreds of workshops touting the latest gimmick for dealing with discipline problems have been created and sold to school districts. However, a growing body of research suggests that many of the discipline problems occurring in schools today are related to general student boredom, regimented classes and teachers, and ineffective teaching strategies (e.g., an overreliance on lecture). Thus, teachers often have to rely on their own intuitive knowledge about how to create and maintain a supportive learning environment that minimizes discipline problems.

Activity

Participate in the following activities to examine how student behavior and classroom management is handled in the class you are observing:

1. Observing student misbehavior: Note the kinds of student behaviors that seem to be most disruptive in the classroom that you are observing:
   - Talking
   - Daydreaming
   - Shouting out answers
   - Throwing things
   - Hitting other children
   - Verbal sparring
   - Other:

When did you see most of the misbehavior occur?

- At the beginning of a lesson
- At the end of the lesson
- During transition times
- At the beginning of the day
- At the end of the day
- After lunch/recess/bathroom breaks
- Other: *students finished work*
- Other: _______________________
- Other: _______________________

2. Observing teacher behavior: Note the different strategies the teacher used to handle behavioral problems in the classroom. Tally the number of times the teacher uses the following strategies:

- Eye contact and/or hand signal to a student
- Immediately send student to the principal’s office
- Ignore the student behavior
- Assign the student to detention
- Mark student’s name on the board as a warning
- Send a note home to a parent about the student’s behavior
- Touch a student on the shoulder or head to redirect attention
- Stand close to a student