Providing Structure: Routines and Rules Checklist

by Carolyn Ito

Teachers who develop and communicate clear routines and rules to their students are more likely to create well-managed classrooms and enjoy the year teaching. Consider each of the following questions. Check each indicator that you feel needs to be improved in your classroom.

1. Do I develop efficient procedures and routines for my classroom? Do my students know how to:

   - Enter and leave the classroom?
   - Get to work immediately?
   - Come to attention?
   - Respond in emergency situations (fire drill, injury, loss of power)?
   - Distribute, exchange, and collect materials?
   - Sharpen pencils?
   - Move about the room?
   - Ask questions and request help?
   - Listen to and respond to questions?
   - Indicate understanding?
   - Respond to visitors, knocks at door, and phone calls?
   - Listen during PA system announcements?
   - Work cooperatively?
   - Obtain missed assignments upon returning from an absence?
   - Use time wisely when completing an assignment early?
   - Move appropriately through the halls?

2. Do I determine viable classroom rules?

   - Do my rules support school-wide and district policy?
   - Do my rules set and maintain limits?
   - Do I have 5 or fewer rules?
   - Are my rules stated positively and succinctly?
   - Do my rules include positive and negative consequences?

3. Do I teach and reinforce my procedures, routines, and rules?

   - Do I teach my classroom routines and rules?
   - Do I post my rules in the classroom?
• Do I send home a copy of the rules to be signed by parents/guardians?
• Do I explain, model, demonstrate and have my students rehearse routines and rules?
• Do I reinforce procedures until they become routines?
• Do I test student knowledge of rules by the second week of school?
• Do I periodically review the rules?
• Do I teach the rewards and consequences for following the rules?
• Do I encourage students to support each other in following the rules and routines?

4. Do I plan and give rewards for following rules?

• Do I emphasize that students earn rewards?
• Do I teach what my rewards mean (like praise, positive self-concept)?
• Do my rewards promote self-discipline?
• Do I explain the time factors associated with rewards?
• Do I post my rewards along with the rules?
• Do my rewards include smiles, high fives, and handshakes?
• Do I have an efficient system for keeping track of who earned awards?

5. Do I develop and administer consequences for breaking rules?

• Do I teach the consequences for breaking rules?
• Do my consequences encourage students to choose the acceptable behaviors?
• Are my consequences reasonable and logical?
• Do I deliver consequences immediately?
• Do I deliver consequences privately?
• Can I deliver consequences without interrupting my lesson?
• Do I deliver consequences without raising my voice?
• Do I deliver consequences without sarcasm, guilt, or coercion?
• Do I publish the consequences with the rules?
• Do my consequences provide opportunities for students to build problem-solving skills, responsibility, and self-discipline