



Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District

Instructional Office Newsletter

9 Mistakes That Will Sabotage Your Classroom Management

1. *Painting a child into a corner.*

Your most challenging students will often try to engage the teacher in power struggles. A skilled teacher can avoid these high stakes moments. The goal is to stop a disruptive behavior while also keeping the student in class. It's important to avoid a showdown between student and teacher. These situations end up with everyone losing. The teacher doesn't have to win in the moment. The situation needs to be addressed in the moment, but fully resolving a problem can happen at a later time. After some time passes, the results are often much better than escalating the situation when emotions are hot.

2. *Handling private matters publicly.*

Students don't want to lose face in front of their peers. You can always delay and say, "Let's talk about this later." Just be sure to follow up as you promised. If a student feels disrespected or belittled in front of others, it will not end well. Try to keep tough conversations private. The tone will often be much different when there is not an audience.

3. *Failing to give a kid a fresh start.*

We all want to have an opportunity for a fresh start. We don't want to be judged by our worst moments. Our students need forgiveness too. So after an issue is resolved, let the student know they have a clean slate. Today is a new day. Let them know you believe in them and expect them to do great.

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IMPORTANT DATES

February 2	Groundhog Day	
February 12	100 th Day of School	
February 14	Valentine's Day	
February 19	President's Day	
February 19-23	Winter Vacation	
February 26	Back to School	

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Central office is a **fragrance-free zone** so please be respectful and plan accordingly when you visit.

Due to one of our members at the CO being highly sensitive to any type of fragrance, we ask that staff visiting/meeting at the Administration building refrain from using any scented products. Fragrances from personal care products, air fresheners, laundry and other cleaning products have been associated with adversely affecting a person's health. We ask that we all work together to make the environment a safe and healthy workplace for everyone.



Thank you very much for your cooperation!





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4. Using cutting sarcasm.

Sarcasm can be very dangerous. I've seen it used in a way that is not threatening and is just playful, but sarcasm can be degrading and manipulating. The best advice is to not use sarcasm at all.

5. Speaking poorly of someone's friends or family.



Never criticize a student's friends or family members. You can certainly stand up for what's right, but don't pass judgments on people. It's also very important to never talk badly about a student when they are not present. If you wouldn't make a comment in front of that student's mother or grandmother, you probably shouldn't say it to a group of students or another teacher. If your harsh comment gets back to the student, it will be difficult to ever repair the relationship.

6. Speaking poorly of another staff member.

Never criticize another staff member in front of students as this creates a toxic environment. And, always defend a colleague if students are being critical. Even fair criticism isn't fair when it's shared at the wrong time and location. Tell your students if they have a concern with another teacher they should go talk to that person directly. If you have a concern with another teacher, you too should speak to them directly about it and not complain about them behind their back.



7. Losing control of your own behavior.

Always remember you're *the* adult and a professional. You have to stay in control of yourself and your actions. If you act badly, it will make it much more difficult to address the student's misbehavior. The student and the parents will be focused on what you did instead of focusing the responsibility the student's own actions. I can't tell you how many times I've worked to help a student reflect on their own bad behavior, but they are focused on what the teacher did instead. Sometimes that happens when the teacher was completely upright. But sometimes it's because the teacher showed up poorly in the situation.

8. Comparing a student to a sibling or another student.

Avoid comparing students to one another or to a brother or sister. These types of judgments chip away at dignity. You wouldn't want to be subjected to public comparisons with another teacher. Students don't like this either. Even comments like "Your sister was so smart or funny" that seem positive may chip away at a student's dignity. People want to be noticed for who they are and not compared to someone else.

9. Rushing to judgment without listening.

This one encompasses so much. It's easy to jump to conclusions or make assumptions in the course of a day working with students. Teachers make so many decisions. [I shared recently about a situation where I really embarrassed myself by making a quick judgment in a situation.](#) The key is slow down and approach problems with a *sense of curiosity*. Work to understand what is going on with the child, what needs they are trying to meet, or why they are not successful even when expectations are clear and consistent.

A Way of Crystalizing a Lesson Plan in One Sentence

In this Cult of Pedagogy article, Norman Eng describes how he wrestled with the burden of writing full lesson plans every day, for every class, five days a week. "There's no way to know what'll happen Friday when so much changes on Monday," he says. And who has time to write all those lesson plans in advance? After a while, he defaulted to jotting notes on what he wanted to teach each day of the week and amending his plans as needed.



But that was less than ideal. Eventually, he hit upon the idea of formulating lesson plans on three things:

- **The What** – What do I want my students to know (or do) by the end of class? What is the content knowledge or skill to be learned? – for example, evaluating the credibility of online sources.

- **The How** – What method, strategy, tool, or activity will ensure they reach the goal? Often it will be a hands-on activity – for example, students will evaluate the credibility of online sources by working in groups to triangulate and address critical questions such as, *does the author cite or provide links to research?*





• **The Why** – So what? What is the ultimate purpose for learning this content or skill? What's in it for students? How will they benefit? Well, students need to be proficient at evaluating the credibility of online sources so they can make better decisions down the road. The WHY question also helps formulate a good lesson opening or hook – for example, *With so much out there, how do you decide what information to trust online?*



Eng likes to boil all this down to a one-sentence lesson plan: Students will be able to evaluate the credibility of online sources by working in groups to address a critical question so that they will be prepared to make better decisions as they explore the Internet. Here's how this would play out in the lesson's details:

- ✓ **Opening:** Ask students about their experiences searching for information online.
- ✓ **Mini-lesson:** Ask them to think about better ways to find information and teach them how to triangulate.
- ✓ **Guided practice:** Model your “think-aloud” process for triangulating information by searching online for, *Is climate change real?*
- ✓ **Activity:** Students apply the same triangulating strategy to another topic – for example, *Do vaccines cause autism?*
- ✓ **Closing/assessment:** Why is good judgment so important in the information age?

Eng addresses some likely questions about this super-short lesson planning format:

• **What if I'm required to write and submit full lesson plans?** The one-sentence **What/How/Why** is the lesson objective. “Once established,” says Eng, “it's fairly straightforward to flesh out... Remember to bookend your lesson with the WHY.”

• **Isn't the one-sentence lesson plan really just a lesson objective?** Ideally, lesson objectives would include the What, How, and Why, but they often don't. The How and Why push us to think from the students' perspective and make it easier to plan the lesson opening, activities, and closing.



• **What if I'm required to write lesson plans based on standards?** “Then your WHAT is

already done,” says Eng. If there's a Common Core or other standard for the lesson, turn it into a one-sentence lesson plan.

• **What if I'm having trouble figuring out the WHY?** Asking this question spurs us to think about the underlying theme or Big Idea. For example, what's at the heart of just-in-time operations management? Efficiency. What's behind the 1989 Tiananmen Square protest? Injustice. Why does oxidation matter? Certain foods go bad (a half-eaten apple turning brown) and there are ways to avoid that. If you're really stuck with the WHY, says Eng, just Google it.

“Introducing the One-Sentence Lesson Plan” by Norman Eng in *Cult of Pedagogy*, October 15, 2017, <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/one-sentence-lesson-plan/>

With Social-Emotional Learning, Less Is More

In this *Education Week* article, Hunter Gehlbach (University of California/Santa Barbara) recalls a teacher blurting out to a group of academics, tech entrepreneurs, and funders who were brainstorming ways to fix schools, “With all that is asked of teachers already, where do you propose that we find the time for your pet projects? If you want us to listen, please show us ideas that simplify our lives.” Gehlbach believes teachers are justified in having a similar reaction to the glut of advice being given on social-emotional learning and character development. “So how can we simplify their lives,” he asks, “without oversimplifying these complex ideas?”



Gehlbach suggests distilling social-emotional learning to three core competencies that are “truly fundamental” prerequisites to students' academic success and personal well-being:

• **Social connectedness** – Students won't learn if they hate their teachers or fear ridicule from their classmates. Conversely, students who have





strong social connections tend to be significantly more engaged and have higher achievement.



• **Motivation** – Without this, students don't have goals to pursue or energy to pursue them. Simple motivational strategies – like showing students the value of what they're

studying or giving them choices among a manageable number of options – can improve feelings of competence as well as boost achievement.

• **Self-regulation** – To learn and be prepared for life's challenges, students need to choose effective study strategies, focus their attention, and stick to their goals.

By simplifying social-emotional learning to these three fundamentals, says Gehlbach, teachers can quickly diagnose what's going on with a student who is off-track by asking:

- **How healthy are this student's social relationships?**
- **What goals is the student pursuing?**
- **What are the student's self-regulatory strengths and weaknesses?**

These questions focus teachers on the "low-hanging fruit" for improving student success. Even modest interventions in these three domains can yield big improvements in student outcomes.

"With Social-Emotional Learning, Keep It Simple" by Hunter Gehlbach in Education Week, October 25, 2017 (Vol. 37, #10, p. 24-25), www.edweek.org; Gehlbach can be reached at hgehlbach@education.ucsb.edu.



librarians have transitioned from being the "sage on the stage" to the "guide on the side," says McNair, "creating a crosswalk between content standards and what it *feels* like to be a teenager inside a classroom in this, the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century – a time when information is ubiquitous and students need high-level problem-solving and collaboration skills to prepare for the future."



To create library lessons that don't look and feel "old-school" to students, librarians need to consider two things:

- **There are always seven students in the room who know what you are about to tell them.**
- **There are always a dozen students who have misconceptions about the information you are preparing to share with them.**

Keeping these two hard truths in mind is the key to designing units and lessons that stand a chance of connecting with young adolescents.

McNair recommends kicking off with open-ended questions that connect the content being studied with students' lives and families; then immersing them in compelling visual images and asking them to jot impressions; then getting students answering the question, "**What are you wondering about this issue?**" and exploring by looking for resources and asking questions. The most compelling sequence of questions is: **What do you see? What are you wondering? and Why do you say that?** Students then need to be provided with "multiple opportunities to think about how to most effectively convey their new ideas and then design, write, create, or perform an impactful communication," says McNair. "The learning ecosystem in a middle- or high-school library is a perfect place to foster students' communication skills."

"By inviting teens to discuss and make personal connections to the content," she says, "the students in the room who already know about the content and those who have misconceptions about the content are provided with opportunities to share and grow... Letting teens express opinions, imagine possibilities, and exchange ideas and experiences before educators deliver content yields a classroom of engaged learners and creative thinkers... Learning doesn't occur when students listen. Learning happens



Getting Teens Wondering Before Trying to Teach Them Something

In this article in *Knowledge Quest*, Ellen McNair (Fairfax County Schools, Virginia) says the best secondary-school librarians learn with their students, orchestrate inquiry projects, foster a growth mindset, get students discovering worthwhile content, take full advantage of available technology, and spur students to become critical, information-literate thinkers. These





when they talk, think, share, and reflect.”

McNair believes that think-like-a-teenager questions (quite different from standards-based questions) are an essential element in effective units and lessons.

Here are some examples from civics, astronomy, chemistry, and history:

□ **Standards-based**

question: *What are the basic tenets of democracy?*

□ **Think-like-a-teenager**

questions: *Who has authority over me? Who really has any authority?*

□ **Standards-based question:** *What are the core values of democracy?*

□ **Think-like-a-teenager questions:** *Do the people serve the government or does the government serve the people? In what ways do restrictive laws allow us to have freedom?*

□ **Standards-based question:** *What were the causes of the Civil War?*

□ **Think-like-a-teenager question:** *Is anything worth fighting for?*

□ **Standards-based question:** *What is microgravity?*

□ **Think-like-a-teenager questions:** *What would you like about being weightless? What opportunities would it afford? Is being weightless in space an “altered” state? Where would you rather live: in a world that is unpredictable or predictable? What might be challenging?*

□ **Standards-based question:** *What are the factors that influence solubility?*

□ **Think-like-a-teenager question:** *What is the difference between magic or mystery and science?*

□ **Standards-based question:** *What is the significance of cell specialization?*

□ **Think-like-a-teenager questions:** *When is being different an advantage? What differences between you and your siblings or cousins are significant?*

□ **Standards-based question:** *Who were the most important leaders in the ancient world?*

□ **Think-like-a-teenager question:** *What makes someone worth remembering?*

When McNair made the mindshift from doing content delivery to first getting students thinking, she



launched a unit on ancient civilizations by putting print and digital resources related to seven civilizations on different tables and asking students to stop at four of the tables and respond to the book covers, pictures, captions, and text and jot down what they were wondering. A biology teacher happened to be in the library and, seeing the productive chaos, asked McNair what was going on. She was so taken with the idea that she launched the next year’s biology curriculum by putting materials for each of the year’s units on tables in the library and having students peruse the resources and jot their “wonderings” about each topic on sticky notes. The teacher posted the notes around the perimeter of the classroom and at the beginning of each new unit put the pertinent questions on a whiteboard and Google doc and let students know that they would be answering their own questions over the next six weeks. “Brilliant!” says McNair.

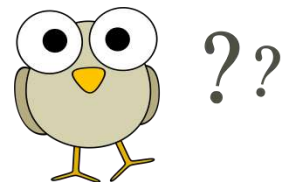
The standard teacher prompt, **Do you have any questions?** “is loaded with social constraints and challenges,” says McNair. “Hearing this prompt, their inner narrative defaults to, ‘I should know this. What will others think when I ask a question? Maybe I should have heard or read this already.’” Instead, she suggests that teachers ask, **What do you wonder?** and listen carefully to what students say or write. Wondering opens students’ minds to new learning.

“Personalized Learning: Think Like a Teenager” by Ellen McNair in *Knowledge Quest*, November/December 2017 (Vol. 46, #2, p. 28-35), <http://knowledgequest.aasl.org>; McNair can be reached at ejones5@me.com.

Crafting Effective “Compelling Questions” for High-School Civics Classes

“Crafting a high-quality compelling question takes time, thought, and revision,” says Rebecca Mueller (University of South Carolina Upstate) in this article in *Social Education*. Working with six high-school civics teachers in Kentucky for much of 2015, Mueller came to understand that an effective compelling question:

- ❖ **Grabs your attention; you can’t help yourself, you want to know more about it;**





- ❖ Is not amenable to a one-word answer;
- ❖ Motivates students to figure it out, answer it;
- ❖ Is relevant, something people care about;
- ❖ Is truly interesting and complex;
- ❖ Is rigorous, big enough that it requires you to really think about it and dig into it;
- ❖ Requires serious additional research;
- ❖ Demands the use of multiple sources and multiple lenses.



The teachers Mueller worked with noticed that questions that resonated for some people didn't for others, which suggested the value of working with their colleagues to fine-tune questions. "The opportunity to play with compelling questions in a safe, collaborative environment left these teachers more confident in their grasp of the concept and more excited to use compelling questions in their classrooms," says Mueller. Here are the prompts that she and the teachers came up with to generate each compelling question:

✚ **Does it promote digging deeper?** The question should push students beyond surface-level thinking (for example, *What are the requirements for presidential candidates?*) to inquiries around big ideas and enduring issues (*Are great men or women chosen to be president?*).

✚ **Is it debatable?** A good question shouldn't lead students, intentionally or unintentionally, to a "right" answer. Students should be able to arrive at multiple valid answers using a variety of approaches. A low-level question on how the U.S. Constitution exemplifies a social contract can be beefed up by asking, *What are the competing responsibilities inherent in a social contract?*

✚ **Do I want to answer it?** "Although teachers believed that relevance to students was important," says Mueller, "for many it was easier to begin with their own interests." One veteran teacher asked students what would have happened if particular voices had been excluded from the Constitutional Convention – a bit of "alternative history" she'd always wanted to explore.

✚ **Will my students care about it?** The trick is

blending students' interests with the demands of the curriculum. An example: *Does the Constitution protect people from the government?* combines adolescents' perennial interest in freedom and material they're not necessarily interested in but need to learn.

✚ **Is it too academic?** To hit home, compelling questions need to sound different from standard teacher questions. The premium is on straightforward, student-friendly language that "speaks" to kids. One teacher prefaced a question about the Founders' intentions with the familiar phrase, "We the people."

✚ **Do I have the resources and time to get students there?** A compelling question "is only as good as the inquiry that follows," says Mueller, and it all has to fit within the realistic bounds of classroom time, not to mention students'

knowledge and skills. This means that developing compelling questions should be the first and the last thing teachers do in planning units and lessons, since the accompanying materials and tasks may make revisions necessary.

✚ **Does it lead to more questions?**

Answering one compelling question may spark another question and serve as the beginning of a new inquiry. One teacher's question about how the Bill of Rights shapes society and students' lives got the class asking about how other countries address issues of individual liberty. These students were transitioning from question-answerers to question-askers.

"Calibrating Your 'Compelling Compass' – Teacher-Constructed Prompts to Assist Question Development" by Rebecca Mueller in *Social Education*, November/December 2017 (Vol. 81, #6, p. 343-345), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/2hFShGJ>; Mueller can be reached at rmuelle2@uscupstate.edu.



Strategies to Help Students Discuss Issues with Civility

(Originally titled "Classroom Discourse as Civil Discourse")

In this article in *Educational Leadership*,





Kristina Doubet (James Madison University) and consultant Jessica Hockett describe three ways to teach students how to engage in civil discourse in uncivil times, developing empathy and discernment in formats that allow all students to participate and be heard:

• **Adopting roles – One example for elementary classrooms is assigning students four different “listening lenses” as the teacher reads from a novel:**

- Matchmaker: making connections to parts of the story;
- Fortune teller: predicting what might happen next;
- Detective: hunting for clues that help figure out how to solve a problem;
- Defender: advocating for the choices a character made.

The teacher pauses at strategic points and has students reflect and then share perceptions in “like-lens” pairs, then discuss as a whole class. (This kind of discussion depends on some prior work on democratic discussion norms – staying on topic, listening respectfully, and asking politely for details.)

A high-school teacher used a more sophisticated version for a discussion of *Lord of the Flies*, with assigned role cards for:

- Director: notes the scenes, passages, or dialogue that shed light on power dynamics;
- Philosopher: relates the book’s events to the assertion, *People are inherently savage*;
- Detective: searches for clues about which characters will survive and why;
- Lawyer: gathers evidence that supports or refutes the claim that *Ralph is a hero*.

After recording key ideas and textual evidence in same-role groups, students shift to quads with all four roles, present their findings, and debate the question, *Does power corrupt?*

• **Examining issues from multiple perspectives – Using the Six Thinking Hats approach developed in the business world, middle-school students are assigned different “hats” to debate whether the Electoral College should be abolished:**

- White hat (factual): The evidence suggests... One

fact we don’t know is...

- Red hat (emotional): I feel that... At first glance, this seems...
- Yellow hat (positives): This is promising because... I like the idea of...
- Black hat (weaknesses): One problem I see is... What about...? In real life...
- Green hat (possibilities): Here’s a new thought... I can imagine...
- Blue hat (zooming out): I see a connection between... Overall, it seems...

Like-hat students do research, brainstorm, and bounce ideas off each other. The class then meets together to discuss findings, eventually donning the blue hat to reach a conclusion, then the green hat to propose a plan for electing presidents.

• **Articulating a counter-claim – In Debate-Team Carousel, the teacher poses an issue (for example, *Should recycling be mandatory for all residents?*), puts students in groups of four, and has each student fold a piece of paper into four boxes. The papers are passed around, with students following the instructions for each box:**

- Box 1: Make a claim and provide reasons and evidence for it.
- Box 2: Support the claim in Box 1, making it stronger (whether you agree or not).
- Box 3: Argue against the claim from Boxes 1 and 2.
- Box 4: Wrap up and bring the discussion to a satisfying conclusion.

The papers return to their original owners, who read and comment on their peers’ responses. Debate Team Carousel can be used as a lesson or unit launch to hook interest and/or surface misconceptions.

“These strategies... harness passion while fostering compassion and empathy,” conclude Doubet and Hockett. “They turn controversy into conversation and prepare students to use the language of civil disagreement in a democracy.”

“**Classroom Discourse as Civil Discourse**” by Kristina Doubet and Jessica Hockett in *Educational Leadership*, November 2017 (Vol. 74, #3, p. 56-60), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/2AfotZT>; the authors can be reached at doubetj@jmu.edu and jessicahockett@me.com.

