

## Self-Assessment

Why should we self-assess our classroom management style?

Classroom management basically involves organizing the activities of 25-35 young people. What a daunting task! Few teachers feel that they have mastered management and often when they do, an extremely challenging class comes along that disrupts their newfound self-efficacy. Making improvements in one's skill level typically involves some assessment of starting skill level, establishing goals, and then determining specific steps, use of certain strategies, or other actions that one will take to achieve the goal(s). (indiana SACM)

It is important to determine your personal classroom management style and then to assess your skill level. Following is a simple questionnaire to help you get started. I feel it is better to answer the questions before reading about the different styles, so your answers are unbiased.

Instructions:

### ***What is your classroom management profile?***

Answer these 12 questions and learn more about your classroom management profile. The steps are simple:

- \* Read each statement carefully.
- \* Write your response, from the scale below, on a sheet of paper.
- \* Respond to each statement based upon either actual or imagined classroom experience.
- \* Then, follow the scoring instructions below. It couldn't be easier!

1. = Strongly Disagree
2. = Disagree
3. = Neutral
4. = Agree
5. = Strongly Agree

(text box information from cbv.ns)

The questions are on the following page. The wording has been modified slightly to suit the community college classroom.

- (1) If a student is disruptive during class, I remove him/her from the classroom, without further discussion.
- (2) I don't want to impose any rules on my students.
- (3) The classroom must be quiet in order for students to learn.
- (4) I am concerned about both what my students learn and how they learn.
- (5) If a student turns in a late homework assignment, it is not my problem.
- (6) I don't want to reprimand a student because it might hurt his/her feelings.
- (7) Class preparation isn't worth the effort.
- (8) I always try to explain the reasons behind my rules and decisions.
- (9) I will not accept excuses from a student who is tardy.
- (10) The emotional well-being of my students is more important than classroom control.
- (11) My students understand that they can interrupt my lecture if they have a relevant question.
- (12) If a student requests to leave the room, I always honor the request.

(text box information from cbv.ns, with minor modifications)

Continue reading after you have provided a score for each question.

To score your quiz, add your responses to statements 1, 3, and 9. This is your score for the authoritarian style.

Statements 4, 8 and 11 refer to the authoritative style.

Statements 6, 10, and 12 refer to the laissez-faire style.

Statements 2, 5, and 7 refer to the indifferent style.

The result is your classroom management profile. Your score for each management style can range from 3 to 15. A high score indicates a strong preference for that particular style. After you have scored your quiz, and determined your profile, read the descriptions of each management style. You may see a little bit of yourself in each one.

As you gain teaching experience, you may find that your preferred style(s) will change. Over time, your profile may become more diverse or more focused. Also, it may be suitable to rely upon a specific style when addressing a particular situation or subject. Perhaps the successful teacher is one who can evaluate a situation and then apply the appropriate style. Finally, remember that the intent of this exercise is to inform you and arouse your curiosity regarding classroom management styles.

The classroom management styles are adaptations of the parenting styles discussed in *Adolescence*, by John T. Santrock.

(text box information from cbv.ns)

This questionnaire assumes four basic classroom management styles: authoritarian, authoritative, laissez-faire, and indifferent. We will explore their definitions, how they interact, and how they might affect a teaching performance.

It is important to remember that identifying your current style does not lock you into that style forever. You can make choices, make changes, and, as pointed out above, "evaluate a situation and then apply the appropriate style." I suspect this is an excellent skill to have considering the variations in classroom "personalities" I have experienced.

### **Authoritarian Style**

The authoritarian, "coercive", or autocratic style of management is defined as:

characterized by numerous behavioral regulations, is often seen as punitive and restrictive, and students have neither a say in their management, nor are they seen to need explanations; the teacher's character is sometimes perceived as being cold, even punishing. (phi.ilstu)

when a leader dictates policies and procedures, decides what goals are to be achieved, and directs and controls all activities without any meaningful participation by the subordinates. Such

a leader has full control of the team, leaving low autonomy within the group.  
(Wikipedia authoritarian)

“If this style were summed up in one phrase, it would be ‘Do what I tell you.’” (fast company)

Some typical characteristics are:

- The leader tells and enforces
- Little feedback is sought or needed from team members
- Decisions on processes, tasks, goals are all created by the leader
- There is a sense that team members are rarely trusted with tasks and methods
- The leadership style points at a method of just getting the job done
- No real sense of empowerment normally morale can suffer in the long term

(educational business)

There are benefits to authoritarian management.

Most appropriately, if tasks have to be completed with great urgency and are time critical, setting clear tasks and expectations whilst making the decisions seems a logical step, as often there is no time for discussion. In such conditions, one needs structure, discipline and to get the job done.

... also if a team member’s skill for the task is very low or novice. In which case, giving clear direction and making the right decisions allows the person to focus on learning or applying their skills.

(educational business)

But there are downsides, too.

People that normally opt for this style regularly, can be seen as bossy, cold, and a dictator. ...

Long term use of its use can also build to resentment and a feeling of festering, whereby those team members are never given a chance to grow, proceeding to the feeling of being undervalued and distrusted.

Research has indicated that due to the nature of an authoritarian leader, and that he/she makes decisions and controls the group, creative problem solving is often thwarted as a result.

(educational business)

Consider using this management style in these situations:

- When a task is urgent and needs to be completed quickly, with little time for thought and planning
- ... use this style when skills are in short supply and people need to be guided through a task or tasks with clarity and structure.
- where there is little margin for error.

- When conditions are dangerous – rigid rules can keep people out of harm’s way. (educational business)

Although the term “authoritarian” might carry a negative connotation, we can see from the descriptions and benefits that it is not necessarily a “wrong” approach to managing your classroom. Often, in my math classroom, I need to show my students a process and I need them to follow it precisely as shown. In this case, a “do what I tell you” attitude is exactly what is required. Students who are comfortable with this authoritarian style will recognize the value of following directions, whereas some students see my directions as “this is just the teacher’s *opinion* of what should be done” and often fail to complete the process.

### **Authoritative Style**

Authoritative, “coaching,” or “selling” style,

is characterized by behavioral principles, high expectations of appropriate behavior, clear statements about why certain behaviors are acceptable and others not acceptable, and warm student-teacher relationships. (phi.ilstu)

is slightly less autocratic, it still requires a good degree of direction from the leader, whereby he/she now begins to explain ideas and the reasons for such. This approach helps the individual/team to start to develop their skills and reasoning. With this style, leaders begin to sell their message to influence and develop the team. (educational business, situational)

“If this style were summed up in one phrase, it would be ‘Come with me.’” (fast company)

There are advantages to authoritative management.

The high level of student involvement that comes with authoritative management often fosters a high level of student self-motivation. Encouraging discussions helps to build social competence. The mixture of lecturing and class discussions makes it easy for the teacher to put variety into the class period, which increases attentiveness. (scribd.com)

This teacher has a positive, kind and supportive relationship with her students, but they know when she “means business.” Because she has an effective discipline plan and her classroom is orderly, the students trust her and respect her. There is more time for academics. This teacher feels empowered and energized because she sees positive growth and development in her students. Her students feel safe as well as capable. (bridges4kids)

Such a combination aims at preventing problems, and also has the dual purpose of managing behaviour in the short term and developing responsibility among pupils in the long term. (icsei.net)

is most clearly associated with appropriate student behavior (local.lsu)

And there are disadvantages, too.

It is least effective when teammates are defiant and unwilling to change or learn, or if the leader lacks proficiency. (fast company)

Many of the websites I visited while learning about the authoritative style were emphatic that this is the best management style of them all. Some were so sure that they described the other styles with negative or derogatory words. My interpretation is that it is a very good style for many classrooms because it gives the necessary structure for or control over student behavior while offering positive support for student learning. But I also see that not every teacher will have or want “warm student-teacher relationships” and my own experience is that some student groups won’t accept the effort they must put in if they accept a coaching or selling teaching style.

### **Laissez-faire Style**

This is also known as the “indulgent” or “delegative” style.

“The laissez-faire teacher places few demand [sic] or controls on the students. ‘Do your own thing’ describes this classroom. This teacher accepts the student's impulses and actions and is less likely to monitor their behavior.” (cbv.ns)

Loosely translated, laissez-faire means “let it be” or “leave it alone.”

Typical characteristics for laissez-faire managers are:

- They want students to like them and they want to be helpful, so they are warm and supportive but not very good at setting limits.
- Permissive teachers may focus on effort while de-emphasizing the quality of students’ productions.
- Disruptive behavior may be ignored or handled with weak, soft-spoken “reprimands” or pleading.  
(bridges4kids)

The benefits of this style are:

- can be effective in situations where group members are highly skilled, motivated, and capable of working on their own. (verywell.com)
- can be used in situations where followers have a high-level of passion and intrinsic motivation for their work. (verywell.com)
- the learners are actively supported in their effort to seek their own needs using reasonable means (local.lsu)
- students often like this teacher (cbv.ns)

The disadvantages are:

- this overindulgent style is associated with students [sic] lack of social competence and self-control. It is difficult for students to learn socially acceptable behavior when the teacher is so permissive. (cbv.ns)

- With few demands placed upon them, these students frequently have lower motivation to achieve. (cbv.ns)
- not ideal in situations where group members lack the knowledge or experience they need to complete tasks and make decisions (verywell.com)

My initial reaction to this style was “Oh, no, I would not do this, ever.” However, I have had groups of students who were highly motivated to learn, and I realized that I had applied these techniques to them. It was fun to see them “take the wheel” with a project and apply their knowledge and experiences to completing it. What was interesting was seeing the natural leaders step up to guide the group and to provide their own corrections when someone got off task. This recollection reminded me that a good classroom manager finds the appropriate style for the group at hand. I have had other student groups where this technique would not have worked because the students were not as motivated or self-directed.

### **Indifferent Style**

Typical characteristics of an indifferent or “permissive” teacher are:

- is not very involved in the classroom
- places few demands, if any, on the students and appears generally uninterested
- just doesn't want to impose on the students. As such, he/she often feels that class preparation is not worth the effort
- will use the same materials, year after year  
(cbv.ns)

Advantages:

- the students ... enjoy a lot of freedom (local.lsu)

Disadvantages:

- classroom discipline is lacking. This teacher may lack the skills, confidence, or courage to discipline students.
- The students sense and reflect the teacher's indifferent attitude. Accordingly, very little learning occurs. Everyone is just "going through the motions" and killing time.
- With few demands placed on them and very little discipline, students have low achievement motivation and lack self-control.  
(cbv.ns)

It was difficult to find anyone who listed an advantage to using this teaching style, and the site that did made me think that advantage was rather dubious. It appeared that everyone agreed it is not a desirable choice.

I hope I never use this style, but I can see how a teacher could come to choose it. When you are tired, when you have had your fill of student misbehavior, when life pulls you in so many directions you just

don't have the energy or time to pay attention to updating your curriculum; all of these can push you to indifference.

### Teaching versus Parenting Styles

We saw at the end of the questionnaire text box that the labels for the four teaching styles have their origins with the four parenting styles. This article suggests a reason for it.

Whenever professors get together, you can bet that at least one of them will complain about students. The most common lament is that today's students lack motivation, hold disrespectful attitudes, are irresponsible about completing assignments on time (or at all), are too dependent on their instructors, cheat on tests or plagiarize papers and feel entitled to good grades and special treatment simply because they come to class. These professors contrast today's troublesome students with the honest, motivated, responsible, independent and humble students that they were back in the day. There is debate about whether unmotivated, dependent, irresponsible, dishonest and hyper-entitled students are more numerous now than in the past ..., but there is no doubt that having such students in class can create problems for their professors. Whether they actually do create those problems depends to a great extent on the professor, which may explain why some classes seem to have so many more problematic students in them than others do.

Traditional wisdom suggests that the most potentially problematic students in higher education come from homes where parents either failed to properly socialize them or, more likely, coddled them, overprotected them and covered for them to such an extent that many entered kindergarten with an artificially inflated level of self-esteem, an underdeveloped sense of responsibility, overdeveloped sense of entitlement, minimal respect for authority and a readiness to blame others for their own shortcomings.

...

These behaviors and attitudes may be formed in childhood, but they are shaped further by social forces outside the home, including the teaching styles, which students encounter at all levels of education. Like parenting styles, there appear to be four main teaching styles, each of which reflects a different blend of teacher involvement and teacher discipline.

([apa.org](http://apa.org) parenting)

The author uses different terminology for two of the styles: "permissive-indulgent" for laissez-faire, "permissive-neglectful" for indifferent. He goes on to describe the behaviors children might develop from the four parenting styles.

Permissive-indulgent, permissive-neglectful and authoritarian parenting have all been associated with a variety of problematic personal, social and emotional characteristics that can play out in academic settings in the form of anxiety and low achievement, but also in irresponsibility, impulsivity, dependency, lack of persistence, unreasonable expectations and demands and dishonesty. Authoritative parenting tends to be associated with the most adaptive

social, emotional and moral development and with the fullest expression of children's intellectual capabilities. (apa.org parenting)

This made me consider my personal parenting style and compare it with my personal teaching style. I see overlaps between them and my attitudes towards a child's and a student's behavior.

He points out a specific parenting style as a possible culprit for poor student behavior:

parenting research is consistent with the notion that permissive-indulgent parenting may play a particularly significant role in laying the groundwork for many of the student behaviors and attitudes teachers in postsecondary education dislike so much. (apa.org parenting)

He then describes the various teaching styles. Those descriptions are very similar to the ones I listed above, however he does add to the description of permissive-indulgent:

- Permissive-indulgent teachers are deeply involved in teaching, and like helicopter parents, perhaps too much so. Though they are devoted to teaching, they fear doing anything that might create stress for students, stifle their personal growth or hurt their self-esteem.
- Often, their lectures and other class activities follow the convoy principle in that they are pitched and paced at a level that is appropriate for the slowest students.
- These teachers see students as children who need help and support to come to class, do their reading and get good grades, so they supplement their lectures with study sheets, PowerPoint slides, lecture notes, practice tests, rewards for coming to class and completing assigned reading and many other student support aids designed to make it difficult or impossible for anyone to fail.
- Some permissive-indulgent teachers allow students to influence the content of the course and may even offer a menu of testing options ranging from standard multiple-choice or essay exams to various kinds of papers, classroom presentations, posters and the like. Their goal is to allow students to choose the testing option that best suits their needs and preferences, including their perceived learning styles. They do so despite the fact that there is little or no scientific evidence that learning styles operate in a significant way, except as learning preferences.
- Although permissive-indulgent teachers establish course requirements and deadlines, they tend to be flexible in enforcing them and sometimes make special arrangements with, and allowances for, individual students on a case-by-case basis.
- They are eager to help students succeed, even if it means lowering standards for success, including by offering certain individuals extra credit opportunities. They spend countless hours working with students who ask for help.

- Of particular significance is their belief that students' efforts to succeed are at least as deserving of reward as the outcome of those efforts, as embodied in test scores and other performance assessments. One observer invoked the addiction literature in describing these teachers as "co-dependent enablers" of their students' lack of motivation, irresponsibility and other academic problems.

(apa.org parenting)

In fact, he offers a list of possible motivations for a teacher to choose this style:

- A permissive-indulgent style can protect a teacher's self-esteem, too, because many such teachers believe that when students don't do well it is mostly the teacher's fault.
- A permissive-indulgent style also provides a way to avoid unpleasant conflicts over rules and grades, because the rules can so easily be bent, especially for the most demanding or apparently deserving students.
- permissive-indulgent teachers may expect that their style — especially if accompanied by a generous grading system — can enhance student evaluations and thus their chances for tenure, promotion and pay raises.

(apa.org parenting)

I find this enlightening, because I see a push to teach this way growing in the secondary education world and I see students arriving in my classroom with the expectation that I will do all these things for them. The idea that I should do everything for my students to keep them from failing has always struck me as wrong. There are advantages to knowing you can fail and there is much to be learned if you have to put in the time and effort to make your own study aids.

I truly do not want to be a "co-dependent enabler."

In fact, I am drawn to his description of an authoritative teacher:

- Authoritative teachers, like authoritative parents, employ a blend of high involvement and firm but fair discipline.
- They care about their teaching and their students, but they reward outcome, not effort.
- These teachers see students as responsible adults, so although they are always willing to help, they are careful not to create dependency or to let themselves be exploited or manipulated.
- They reward academic success with praise as well as high grades, they encourage students to try harder when they need to, and they grant requests for special consideration only if disability or other circumstances clearly justify doing so under school policies.
- They think carefully about their rules and standards, announce them in advance, explain why they are necessary and enforce them consistently.

(apa.org parenting)

The author summarizes these observations here:

Assuming that differing teaching styles, like different parenting styles, have differing impacts, the permissive-indulgent style in particular may be serving to reinforce undesirable student attitudes and behaviors. In other words, permissive-indulgent professors should not be surprised if they always seem to have more than their fair share of problematic students. Parenting research, a small number of empirical studies on teaching styles in higher education ... and the wisdom accumulated over the years by experienced teachers ... suggest that an authoritative style is the one most likely to promote student learning, critical thinking and personal development and least likely to nurture student misbehavior. (apa.org parenting)

While reading this, I asked myself, "Why don't all teachers use the authoritative style?" The author replies,

Some have simply not been exposed to authoritative teaching during their own educations, so they can't emulate it. And even if they have seen this style in action, not everyone wants to be authoritative; other teaching styles might be better matched to their personalities or are more attractive because they require less effort. (apa.org parenting)

### **Teaching is a Performance Art**

You can choose your teaching style and change it as needed. You should choose the one that is appropriate for the situation at hand. And you need to keep in mind how your behavior is influencing your students.

It has been said before and in all probability that the single most significant factor in a student's learning is the teacher. This claim is attested by Ginott who declared that the decisive element in the classroom is the teacher. This is so since the teacher's personal approach is primarily the factor that creates the climate and his or her daily mood makes the weather. A teacher therefore, possesses a tremendous power to make a student's life miserable or joyous. Furthermore, a teacher can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration; can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal or can even humanize or dehumanize a learner, concluded Ginott. (local.lsu)

This is a huge responsibility but not an insurmountable one. I see teaching as a performance art. The teacher is the lead actor, and can influence the moods of the audience, AKA the students.

The process of maintaining a calm and productive classroom environment starts with the teacher. The action and attitudes of a teacher toward a student who is misbehaving can make the situation better or worse. Have you ever noticed that on a day that you are not feeling well, the students are more poorly behaved? Students look to the teacher for consistency and safety in the classroom. Some kids will become anxious and withdraw if it appears that a teacher cannot handle behavior problems. Other students, however, will retaliate if they feel a teacher is overreacting to a situation in a hostile and unnecessary way. (bridges4kids)

In choosing the most appropriate classroom management style, a teacher must see to it that such style must aid him/her in getting the tasks of teaching, marking, and assessment done excellently. Fiddler and Atton pointed out that teachers must perform satisfactorily in order to become effective in carrying out their tasks especially in teaching. This implies that a teacher should not be only concerned with his or her style in classroom management. Moreover, he/she must also be fully conscious of his/her performance in the classroom. (local.lsu)

In summary,

the classroom management process is purposive, that is, the teacher uses various managerial styles or approaches to achieve a well-defined, clearly identified purpose – the establishment and maintenance of those classroom conditions the teacher feels will facilitate effective and efficient instruction with students. (local.lsu)

### **Self-Assessment, Part Two**

What follows are a series of questions you can utilize as a checklist for behaviors you want to have in your classroom. Some are more appropriate for one management style than another, so I recommend you skip the ones that don't apply to you. I see using this list as a valuable tool to get me in the right mindset before the semester starts and also to get me back to the right mindset if I have dealt with problem students or a challenge in my personal life. It, quite possibly, can help me avoid becoming an

1. Maximize structure and predictability in the classroom

- a) I establish and explicitly teach student procedures.
- b) I arrange my room to maximize (teacher to-student) proximity and minimize crowding and distraction.
- c) I actively supervise (move, scan, interact, reinforce).

2. Establish, teach, and positively state classroom expectations.

- a) My rules are stated as “do’s” instead of “nos” or “don’ts.”
- b) I actively involve students in establishing classroom rules.
- c) I explicitly teach and review these expectations or classroom “rules” in the context of routines.

“indifferent teacher.”

Continued on the next page.

### 3. Managing behavior through effective instructional delivery

- a) I conduct smooth and efficient transitions between activities.
- b) I am prepared for lessons/activities (filler activities, materials readied, fluent presentation, clear directions).
- c) I provide a clear explanation of outcomes/objectives.
- d) I end lessons/activities with specific feedback.

### 4. Actively engage students in observable ways

- a) I maximize multiple and varied opportunities for each student to respond during my instruction.
- b) I engage my students in observable ways during teacher directed instruction (i.e., I use response cards, choral responding, votes, and other methods).
- c) I frequently check for student understanding.

### 5. Evaluate Instruction

- a) At the end of the activity, I know how many students have met the objective
- b) I provide extra time and assistance for students who struggle.
- c) I consider and note needed improvements (to lesson) for next time.

...

### 7. Use a continuum of strategies to acknowledge appropriate behavior

- a) I provide specific and immediate contingent acknowledgement for academic and social behaviors (e.g., following expectations).
- b) I also use multiple systems to acknowledge appropriate behavior (teacher reaction, group contingencies, behavior contracts, or token systems).
- c) I use differential reinforcement strategies to address problem behavior.

### 8. Use a continuum of strategies to respond to inappropriate behavior

- a) I provide specific, contingent, and brief error corrections (stating expected behavior) for academic and social errors.
- b) In addition, I use the least restrictive procedure to discourage inappropriate behavior (non-verbals, proximity, teacher reaction, re-teaching, etc.) and proceed to more restrictive procedures.
- c) I respond to inappropriate behavior in a calm, emotionally objective and business-like manner.

Continued on the next page.

9. Developing caring and supportive relationships

- a) I learn and use student names by the end of week 2.
- b) I use explicit activities to learn about students.
- c) I communicate with students/families before school starts and continue frequent contact.
- d) I speak to students with dignity and respect—even when providing correction!

10. Teach about responsibility and provide opportunities for students to contribute to the good functioning of the classroom

- a) I use general classroom procedures and student jobs to enhance student responsibility.
- b) I provide students with self-control and self-monitoring strategies.
- c) I provide social skills instruction and problem-solving strategies.
- d) I provide specific activities for students to get to know one another and solve problems collaboratively.

All text box information from (indiana SACM). Item 6 was omitted as not applicable for a college classroom.

I recommend that you assess yourself on a scale of “need to do”, “need to improve” and “goal achieved” for all items you want to apply to your classroom. This can help you track your progress as well as identify your areas for improvement.

What follows are the two self-assessments as separate pages, useful for copying.