

TITLE | BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

CATEGORY | Garden Educator Training

SUB-CATEGORY | Learning & Teaching Outdoors

OVERVIEW | This document outlines an introductory classroom management training, focusing on the importance of building personal relationships and forming parameters for cooperation.

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Training Rationale:

Education Outside garden educators, often in their first years of teaching, consistently reported that classroom management was one of the more difficult aspects of being a garden educator. This training is designed as an introduction to the topic of classroom management. We suggest leading multiple trainings after this introduction in order to best support garden educators in this topic, including trainings on **Behavior Management, Restorative Practices** and **Trauma Informed Practices**.

Suggested Time of Year:

Before the school year begins, during “Bootcamp.” Please see the *Training Calendar Scope and Sequence*, available in the Table of Contents, for a recommended scope and sequence for the aforementioned interrelated trainings.

Suggested Workshop Length:

2 hrs

Training Objective:

Garden educators will understand how their values and beliefs about students and learning can support or hinder effective classroom management. They will learn and practice techniques for Personal Relationship and Parameters for Cooperation, two of “The Four Ps of Prevention” from *Rethinking Classroom Management*.²

Training Overview:

This training consists of two parts, and serves as an introduction to classroom management strategies. Both parts reference the books *Rethinking Classroom Management*, by Patricia Sequeira Belvel, and *Conscious Classroom Management*, by Rick Smith. We suggest reading the relevant sections of these books prior to leading this training in order to facilitate a productive discussion regarding the main points outlined below. The “Activity Ideas” section includes activities that can be incorporated throughout the discussion.

Part One: Assumptions & Beliefs

This part of the training introduces *Rethinking Classroom Management*, Chapter One: “Rethinking Our Role in the Classroom,” and *Conscious Classroom Management*, Chapter Two, “Assume The Best.”

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This discussion should help garden educators build a solid foundation for using the “Four Ps” described in Part Two. Primary points for discussion include:

- The way we think about ourselves and our students influences our actions. Shifting our mindset from “teacher as manager” to “teacher as leader” helps us respond positively to challenges that arise in the classroom.¹
- Make decisions based on values and beliefs, rather than feelings. If a difficult situation arises, educators might react to students based on feelings of frustration or anger. Having written values and beliefs can help educators reassess the situation, serving as a guide for positive decision making.¹
- Make positive assumptions. Assume that students want to learn content as well as how to behave appropriately, and stay on their side. Doing so allows educators to stay motivated to search for new techniques and strategies to keep students engaged, and prevents them from feeling like students are “pushing their buttons.”²
- “We shouldn’t teach behavior quickly to get it out of the way in order to teach the good stuff. Behavior *is* the good stuff.”²

Part Two: The Four Ps of Prevention

This part of the training introduces the framework, “The Four Ps of Prevention,”¹ with a particular focus on two of the “Ps,” Personal Relationships and Parameters for Cooperation. The concepts covered in the other two “Ps,” Prerequisites for Success and Participation for Involvement are discussed in the **Trauma Informed Practices** training, and covered in *Education Outside’s Best Practices for Teaching*, available in the Table of Contents. Primary points for discussion include:

- Prevention strategies should be effective for 85-90% of stressful classroom situations.
- Personal Relationships: Taking the time to build relationships with students is important. “When a positive relationship is weak or absent, attempts to use *any* managerial strategies will be ineffective.”¹
 - Often garden educators teach hundreds of students in the school, which can make it challenging to build personal relationships with students. Encourage educators to use school photos to help them learn names at the beginning of the year. Alternatively, encourage them to spend part of a class filming students saying their names (only with permission). This way, the educator can be confident about the pronunciation and match the student faces with names.
 - Garden educators often have flexibility in their schedules throughout the school day. Encourage educators to take advantage of breaks between classes to build relationships with students, by playing with them at recess, or inviting a group to the garden during lunch.
 - “Gifts without strings” are “noncontingent reinforcement: positive reinforcement given to students independent of their behavior. There are no strings and no conditions attached to this personal gift.”¹ Encourage educators to give gifts without strings, such as greeting all students at the garden gate with a hug, high-five or fist bump, asking students to help during or after class, giving all students a taste of the produce growing in the garden, or allowing all students to take home a “garden treasure” (i.e. a smelly leaf, a colorful flower, etc.)
 - Encourage garden educators to evaluate their outdoor classroom to ensure that they’ve created a safe space for all students (see *Creating Inclusive Outdoor Classrooms* in the Table of Contents for more details).
 - Encourage garden educators to use icebreakers at the beginning of the year in order for everyone to get to know one another.
- **Parameters for Cooperation**
 - Parameters for Cooperation include school and classroom agreements, as well as routines and rituals for various activities and settings. Parameters help students feel physically safe and psychologically secure in the school environment.² We suggest limiting the discussion in this training to garden agreements, expanding upon the topic in a separate training, using as a guide *Education Outside’s Best Practices for Teaching*, available in the table of contents.
 - Garden agreements can take many different forms, and can vary from school to school. Encourage educators to make garden agreements similar to school rules, when possible (i.e. Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible).
 - Model one of the methods of introducing garden agreements and involving students, as described in *Education Outside’s Best Practices for Teaching*, available in the Table of Contents.

Activity Ideas:

Part One: Assumptions & Beliefs has several great reflection questions that can be included as individual or pair-share activities during part one of this training. Examples from the book include:

- “Write down your values and beliefs about students and learning. If it suits your learning style, use ‘mind maps’ to brainstorm and record visually, on the rays flowing out from the center, your own beliefs about students’ needs in the classroom learning environment. Other options are to craft your beliefs from your favorite quotes or poems or to make a list or outline of your beliefs.”¹ *Rethinking Classroom Management* includes ample examples of this activity to share with participants, including mind maps, a classroom leadership philosophy, and one teacher’s pledge to students.
- “From your own experience as a student, what do you recall teachers doing that you would or would not choose to include in your own classroom/teaching repertoire?”¹
- Practice a few icebreakers with participants. There are several great icebreaker examples in Life Lab’s *The Growing Classroom*, such as “Group Juggle,” and “The Wind Blows For Me.”³ This is helpful for everyone to get to know each other during the training, and provides participants with examples that they can take back to their outdoor classrooms. Ask participants to reflect on how they felt before and after participating in the icebreaker. How might students feel before and after participating in icebreakers with a new class/teacher?

Part Two: The Four Ps of Prevention

- Provide time for educators to work in small groups to write a draft of their garden agreements, using the examples provided as a guide. (For this exercise, it is helpful if educators are somewhat familiar with their outdoor classrooms and have an idea of the rules in place at their school.) Allow time for them to practice one way they might introduce garden agreements to their classes, using *Education Outside’s Best Practices for Teaching* as a guide.

Assessing Understanding:

- Exit Ticket: Ask educators to describe one thing they will commit to doing in order to develop personal relationships with students.
- During the activity time when educators are practicing ways to introduce garden agreements, circulate to assess understanding.

References:

1. Smith, R. (2004). *Conscious Classroom Management: Unlocking the Secrets of Great Teaching*. San Rafael, California: Conscious Teaching Publications.
2. Sequeira Belvel, P. (2010). *Rethinking Classroom Management*. California: Corwin.
3. Jaffe, R., Appel, G. (2007). *The Growing Classroom*. South Burlington, Vermont: National Gardening Association.