

Classroom Structures

(Module 1)

How do I get to know my students?

- Start each day with a question that helps you learn about your children.
 - Eg. You can ask them questions like “What’s your favorite colour?” “Which is your favorite animal?” “Do you have any brothers/sisters?”
- Once you are done asking the easy questions for a long period of time, at least a few months, and kids feel comfortable talking with you, they will be able to open up about a lot more. You can then help them work around/manage themselves in times of family issues.
 - This will help you understand your kids’ backgrounds
 - It will help you build connections with them
 - It will help you find ways to motivate or encourage them to excel
- Share stories about yourself with your kids.
 - I believe it is very important for your students to understand where you come from and who you are as a person.
 - When kids are able to connect with you, as you set expectations in class, they will try their best not to disappoint you. This in turn will help you manage your class while the children are trying hard to “be good” on their own!
 - ALL my kids know almost EVERYTHING about me. This helps them connect with me and build a relationship with me, as more than a teacher to them.
- Have a corner near your teacher desk with a photo of you with your family or you doing something cool or you at an exciting place
- Have a corner or corners for the children to write down their answers to the questions you may ask them (slide 2)
 - It will be easy for you to read and for the girls to get to know each other
 - Have a birthday chart listing everybody (including your) birthdays
- Use small pieces of paper as ID cards pinned to their uniform, with their names and a fun fact about them each day/week

How do I help them behave in class?

- Rules Chart:
 - Set basic rules for your classroom like listen, sit smart, raise a hand to answer, take permissions, etc..
 - Refer to the chart every day to help incorporate them in class.
- Theme/Incentive System:
 - If you have a theme in your class, you can create an incentive system for your kids. This means that every time they work well individually and/or as a team, they can claim rewards at the end of the week, month or term.
 - These rewards can be decided by you but I recommend you sit with your kids and make this list, as that will excite them more!
 - The theme in my class has been Rangers for the last two years. Kids are divided into four groups – Foresteers, Reefers, Mountaineers and Desert Rangers. The kids get different coloured tokens for showing different rules or values in class. At the end of the week, they line up depending on the number of tokens they have, and choose their “Leadership Roles” for the next week!
- Miss Feels Chart:
 - Once you have built your relationship with the children, you can have a “Miss Is...” chart, expressing your mood dependent on the kids’ behaviour, during the day. Mine says Ecstatic, Joyful, Neutral, Upset, Disappointed.
 - This also helps kids learn feeling names and spellings.
- Class Behaviour Chart:
 - You can base this on your class theme and have different sections for how the students are being as a whole. This is similar to the “Miss Feels” chart.
 - Eg. If your class theme is “Space”, your sections can say, “In the Air”, “Takeoff”, “Ready for Flight”, “Technical Difficulty”, “Rocket Broken”.
 - You would ideally use a paper clip or something you can move easily up/down to keep changing the tracker.

- Use of badges:
 - You can also use simple smiley badges to help manage behaviour. Pin badges to students' uniforms as they are displaying "good behaviour" or working hard. Soon, the other students will also start mimicking this child's behaviour.
- Shout-outs:
 - Once your children are comfortable with you and you have set basic expectations in class, simply appreciating one child's action will encourage others to behave similarly. You can say things like "Thank you Sharmika for sitting in smart position!" or "I love how Priya is ready with her Maths books because she knows it is Maths class now!"

How do I help my kids understand right from wrong?

- Start your day by talking to your kids about making the “right” choice or the “good” choice. Kids inherently know right from wrong, but sometimes it has to be spelt out to them, as it is easy to get carried away. Every morning, if you have an open discussion with your kids on this topic, you will notice that they make “better” choices during the day, too.
- Have a “Value for the Week” that involves the kids in stories, games and activities, helping them articulate and imbibe the value.
 - You should follow this up with shout-outs during the day, when a child/team shows the Value that is in discussion that week.
- At the end of each day, you can sit with your kids and discuss the class behavior. Once you create a safe space for the kids to engage in, they will automatically be reflective and honest about their behavior in class.
 - Eg. One of my students who used to be late to school every day and blame his mum for sleeping in and not getting ready, soon starting opening up about why he was actually late to school and later changed to one of the kids who would be first to arrive in school!
- Use a “reflection file” in which kids write down their behavior and mindsets displayed during the day.
 - Please refer to the one I have uploaded for clarity.
- Spend time explaining to the kids the importance of “making good choices”. It is difficult for our kids to connect with the idea of being a Doctor or Engineer or Dancer or Artist, as they lack exposure and access to such individuals. Often, their family members don’t work and struggle becomes a normal way of life. However, once the kids are made aware of a higher standard of living that can be achieved by exceling in school, it opens up a whole new side of the kids. Hearing it from someone they care about every day, will encourage them to try their best too.

How do I build leadership in my students?

- As we had discussed the names of each class will be based on a Woman Leader/Achiever, you can use this opportunity to build leadership skills in the girls.
- You can have different “jobs” that need to be done in a classroom, and assign leaders for each of those jobs.
 - Eg. you can have a Cleanliness Hero, Exercise Master, Queue Boss, etc. to manage your class.
 - I suggest you have a leadership role for each girl in class.
 - The job may be trivial but by rotating it between the girls on a weekly basis, everyone has the opportunity to do everything.
 - Having fun/cool job names also teaches the kids English.
- If you do not wish to give the girls jobs to take ownership of their classroom, you can even have a Leader Wall of Fame where you put up pictures of three or five girls that have shown values and followed rules in class.
 - However, make sure you keep changing the girls you pick, and don't always pick the same set of students, as this may discourage the other girls from participating and performing.
- Shout-out to any student who is showing even the slightest form of leadership in class.
 - Eg. if a girl is asking her friends to be quiet while you are teaching, recognize her actions and celebrate her.
 - This will help others realized their actions and encourage them to change for the better.
- Always emphasize that the classroom is as much the kids' space as it is yours. Building ownership in the kids over the space as a whole, drives them to keep it clean and tidy. It also helps them respect their class, their peers, their teacher, and their learning.

How do I help my kids know what they've understood and what they need help in?

- Having academic trackers in class helps the kids visualize their goals or the goals you set for them plus track their growth easily.
- Class tracker:
 - Share the goals you have set for your kids as a whole class and have a tracker marking the average growth of the class on a monthly/unit basis. Compare it to the average growth you had predicted, to give yourself and the kids clarity on the possibility of achieving your goals, as a team.
- Subject tracker:
 - Have a subject tracker for all subjects or English and Math, for each kid. At the end of a major set of tests/milestones, have them move up the ladder/tracker.
 - You can Google many many many innovative ways to do this.
- Self-tracker:
 - At a later stage, you can have the kids mark their own class tests, books, and chart their growth in their trackers.
 - They can also do this in the form of peer-tracking where they are checking and marking growth for their friends, and not for themselves.
 - You can also use self-tracking for smaller class tests on a daily basis, like a dictation test or small Math exercise.
 - Kids realizing and correcting their own mistakes, lowers the chances of them making the same one at a later date.