

Classroom Management Approaches to Support School Connectedness

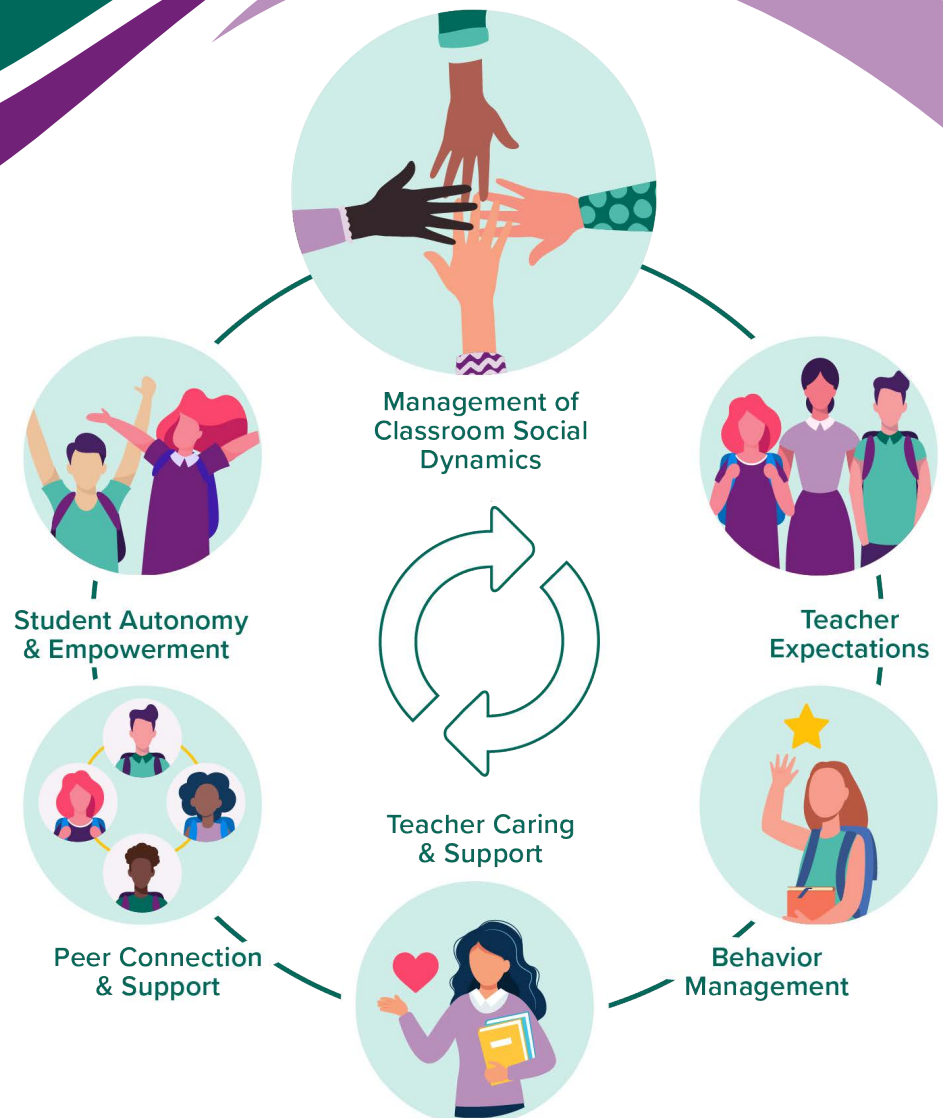
Management of Classroom Social Dynamics

School connectedness is the belief held by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. Students who feel connected and engaged at school are less likely to report risky behaviors (such as early sexual initiation, substance use, violence, and suicide) and have more positive academic outcomes.¹⁻⁶

Classroom management is the process that teachers and schools use to create positive classroom environments in face-to-face or virtual learning modes. Classroom management includes teacher- and student-led actions to support academic and social-emotional learning among all students.⁷ Well-managed classrooms that incorporate positive behavior management strategies are one way that teachers and other school staff can build school connectedness.⁸

Which classroom management approaches and skills increase connectedness?

CDC researchers reviewed scientific papers on classroom management and identified six classroom management approaches that promote student connectedness and engagement. Strategies to support these approaches were identified through a structured review of web-based practice resources. Management of Classroom Social Dynamics is one of these approaches.



Management of Classroom Social Dynamics. When teachers actively take steps to manage social dynamics and promote positive interactions and friendships in class, students report feeling more connected to their peers,⁹ higher levels of school bonding (Gest et al., 2014), and a sense of belonging at school.¹⁰ Students reported feeling more connected to their peers and school when teachers:

- 1 Were aware of friendship dynamics in the class (e.g., who is friends with who).
- 2 Could identify students who were being victimized or bullied by peers.
- 3 Took steps to mitigate status extremes between students in class.
- 4 Supported students who appeared isolated in class.⁹



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These skills can help manage classroom social dynamics and support isolated or victimized students.

Skill	Example Strategies
<p>Observing and noting student social dynamics</p>	<p>Observe and note to yourself which students appear to be friends and which do not, and which students appear isolated from peers.⁹ In virtual or face-to-face classroom settings, regular check-ins with students can help provide an opportunity to learn more about student social dynamics and students' sense of connectedness to their peers.^{11,12}</p>
<p>Structuring the classroom environment so that social status is less relevant</p>	<p>Assign seating in ways that promote opportunities for students to interact, collaborate, and develop relationships as well as disrupt social hierarchies.</p> <p>In large group virtual classroom sessions, consider breaking the class into smaller groups or "breakout rooms" to encourage interaction and collaboration. Rotate synchronous/asynchronous instruction or circulate among simultaneous breakout sessions.^{13,14}</p>
<p>Promoting some degree of balance in social status across students</p>	<p>Create extra opportunities for students who appear socially isolated. to receive recognition.⁹ For example, identify the strengths and interests of students who may appear isolated from peers and create opportunities for them to apply and share these in class.¹⁵</p>

Skill	Example Strategies
<p>Creating opportunities for students who appear socially isolated to develop new friendships</p>	<p>Consider strategically pairing students who appear isolated with other student(s) who may share similar interests to work together on class activities and assignments. Consider social dynamics and the needs of students who may appear to be socially isolated from peers.¹⁶</p> <p>For students who struggle with social skills, consider working with them to develop and practice social skills or strategies for forming friendships.⁹ For example, consider working with the school counselor to establish a social skills group, or “lunch bunch” that provides isolated students an opportunity to connect with others, talk about social challenges, and practice social skills.¹⁶</p>
<p>Taking clear steps to counter-act bullying, including discriminatory, prejudicial or harmful speech and behaviors</p>	<p>Emphasize respect and sense of community. If you observe a student being disrespectful to others, (a) quickly name the issue (“That was not respectful.”), (b) re-state expectations (“We have agreed to treat each other with respect.”), (c) provide an opportunity for the students to engage in a positive interaction (“Let’s try it again with respect.”), and (d) give positive feedback (“That was much better.”). If the comment reflects a lack of understanding or bias, provide factual information to counteract the misunderstanding and reinforce sense of community (e.g., “Anyone can get sick, and we are a community that takes care of each other;” “It’s not OK at this school to use ‘gay’ disrespectfully to mean something is bad.”).¹⁷</p>

Tools and Templates

- Edutopia. [8 Strategies to Improve Participation in Your Virtual Classroom.](#)
- Understood. [7 Ways the Teacher Can Help Your Child Make Friends.](#)
- Welcoming Schools. [What Do You Say to “That’s so Gay” & Other Anti-LGBTQ Comments?](#)

Reflection Notes

*How do I currently do this?
What could I do to improve?*



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