



Classroom Management System

Why a classroom management system?

It almost doesn't need to be said, but good classroom management is essential when you are dealing with a class of children with sticks in their hands!

It doesn't matter if this is your first year teaching, or you've been teaching for many years. It is still going to be a challenge to manage a group of children with drum sticks in their hands, and a potentially very loud bucket in front of them.

The ideas in this article are not necessarily the only way to achieve success, nor are they guaranteed to bring great results. However, they are a starting point for you to adapt to your own situation.

If you begin well, you can maintain the momentum and have a wonderful experience together. If the class is out of control it can quickly become a big headache!

Setting up the classroom for success

Setting up the classroom in advance is very important. Certainly for the first few sessions, the teacher needs to have the space ready to go so that students can have a good understanding of what is going to happen and how it happens.

If you have to move chairs around the room or stop and hand out buckets or sticks, it will provide an opportunity for children to misbehave. That is why it is important to have the spaces set up in advance. Once children have had a few sessions and know where everything is placed, they can assist in setting up and packing up the room.

There should be two areas: the buckets and the floor

You will need to have two areas in your classroom - one for the buckets and one open space on the classroom floor, away from the buckets. These areas are referred to as "the floor" and "the buckets." The classroom screen needs to be visible from both the floor area and from the buckets.

A key part of this classroom management strategy is having students move regularly between the floor and the buckets. This means there is no time available for them to get distracted.

The floor

The floor area just needs to be free space, ideally in front of the classroom screen. Students need to sit on the floor with no books, no sticks and nothing to distract them.

The bucket area

Set the bucket area up with a row or two of chairs. Place a bucket in front of each chair, with its open end on the floor. Carpet is preferred, as buckets will not move if placed with their open end downwards on carpet.

How you do this will largely depend on the amount of space available in your classroom.

If you have a very large area, then use a single row in a semicircle.

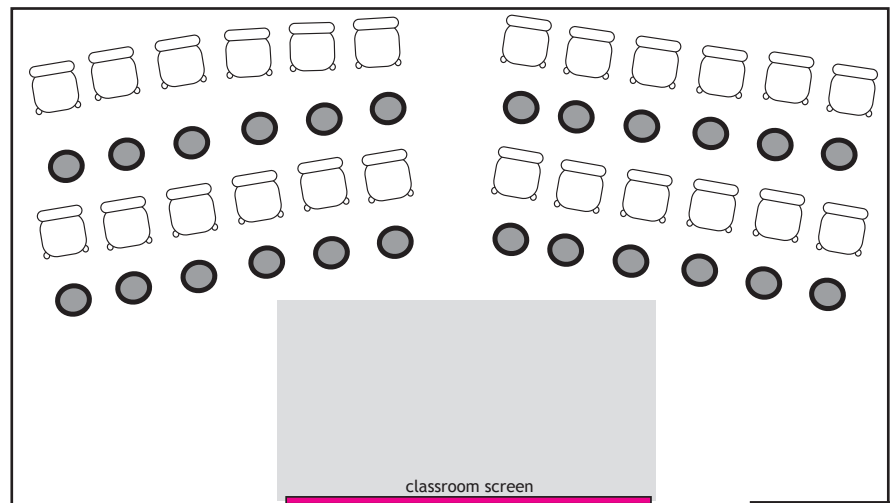
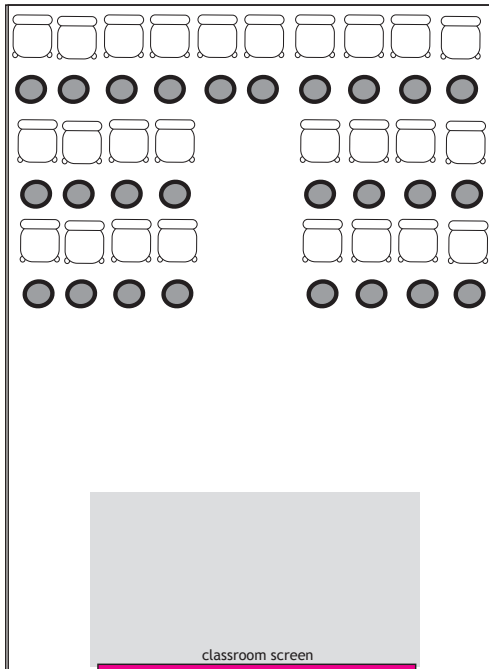
If you have a smaller area, then use two or three straight rows.

If doing pieces requiring two groups, then set up the buckets with a clear space between groups. This way you can indicate “The people on this side are group one and the people on this side are group two.”

Sticks stay with the buckets in a consistent place

Have the sticks placed on the buckets or on the floor alongside. Having these set up and preset in advance will minimise the disruption to the learning.

Possible classroom setup diagrams:



P.P.P.P.P.

A great teacher once said: “Prior preparation prevents poor performance.”

What is the prior preparation that a teacher needs to do?

1. Know as closely as possible how many children are expected in the class.
2. Have the repertoire for the session chosen, and be familiar with the piece and its sections.
3. Set up the space as much as possible for the group.
4. Have a clear goal for the session planned.

Enrolment

By enrolment, I'm not talking about paperwork! Of course children are enrolled in your classes, and for the most part you (or the students) don't get a choice about that!

What I'm talking about is their mental enrolment in the activity. Enrolment in the activity means that they consider themselves part of the team, and they really WANT to be there.

So how do you encourage their mental enrolment?

1. Your own positivity and energy

The first step towards getting the children enrolled in an activity is that you, the teacher, needs to bring outstanding positivity and energy. That sounds a little crazy, but it's true!

If the teacher presents something with body language that says, *"This is pretty average, but we have to do it,"* how much chance does it have for success?

Or if the teacher goes into a class thinking, *"I have to do bucket drumming here, and I don't really want to,"* what likelihood does that have of working?

If you don't love it, don't do it. This might seem harsh, but it's true! You need to really love the activity you're going to do, and present the piece (no matter which one it is) like it's one of your favourites. No matter what piece you are playing, you need to present it like it is incredible, and share this enthusiasm with the students.

If you love the music, then you have a chance of enrolling the group into the idea of creating a fantastic performance of it as a classroom team.

2. Creating a positive group culture

Always bring that energy, and when the students enter the room, sit down with them and use language that shares with them what the intention of the activity is:

*"What I'd like to do today is to work on this fantastic bucket drumming piece called **Funky Buckets**. I want to see if this class might be good enough to play it for the school assembly by the end of this term. Are you up for that?"*

"I know from experience that bucket drumming is LOTS of fun! However I need you ALL to be part of our bucket drumming crew. We need every single person in this room to be part of the team in order to make this really great. We can't leave anyone out. We NEED every single person to perform at their best. Are you OK with that?"

Have these group meetings regularly. Start every session with a positive energy and no matter what happens, keep the idea of enrolment in your mind. Make it your intention to make sure that every child is mentally enrolled in the group activity!

Setting up expectations and classroom rules

If the children are enrolled in the idea of working together, and they really want to be there, then setting rules is not difficult. Children can have a hand in creating their own classroom behaviour expectations, and they therefore will help enforce the behaviours.

If, however they are not really enrolled in the activity, then rules aren't going to be effective, and you may find yourself constantly raising your voice or having to restate rules.

You can of course create as many rules as necessary to suit your classroom, however in many ways, the fewer rules you can have, the better.

In bucket drumming, I feel that the most important key rule to have children follow is this one:

“The only time that a bucket is hit is when the class is playing together.”

This rule is extremely important because if children are allowed to hit their buckets at other times, the class will proceed slowly because the teacher will always be trying to get their attention. They will also miss key information.

When explaining this rule, you need to have children really understand not just the rule, but the reasons WHY this rule is important for your class to adopt as a team.

Therefore, ask the class: *“What will happen if we're all hitting the buckets randomly?”*

You can get responses such as, *“People won't know what to play,”* and, *“We won't all hear important instructions.”*

Have the students tell you the important reasons, in language that they choose, and adopt these reasons. Write the rule down on the classroom whiteboard, along with the reasons WHY this rule is adopted in your classroom.

Then, when students break the rules all you have to do is point to the board and not even say anything, and the behaviour will change.

Consequences

If a student gets reminded more than once, then consequences need to be enforced promptly.

Losing their sticks is one possible consequence and another is making them miss out on playing the buckets and staying on the floor when the rest of the class moves to the buckets.

Our classroom bucket drumming rules:

“We only play buckets together”

WHY?

**If people play at other times we won't hear instructions.
It will take longer to learn our music.**

“We move to the buckets silently”

WHY?

**If we make noise moving to the buckets it will take longer.
We will learn more and have more fun!**