Strategies for Managing Large Classrooms

Managing large groups of students in one class can be challenging.

During this session, participants will learn:
• strategies for building community and using technology
• ways to structure group work and interactive discussions
• techniques for keeping large groups of students engaged, interested, and on task
Christopher Stillwell

Chris has worked as an ESL/EFL educator for over 20 years and as a teacher educator for more than 10 years.

He has an MA in TESOL from Teachers College at Columbia University and an MA in education from the University of California, Irvine’s School of Education. He will soon complete his PhD in education at UC Irvine with a dissertation focused on the needs of English language learners in large classes.

He has also served as an English Language Specialist in Cairo, Egypt, helping develop a TESOL certificate course and establishing a virtual exchange between Egyptian teachers and teachers in the U.S.
Online Discussion Questions

• Where do you teach, and how many students are in your classes?
• What makes managing large classes difficult?
• What teaching techniques work best for large classes?
• How can we maximize students’ participation in a large class?
The Next Question

Do you have examples of ways to provide structure for your large classes?

Please share your ideas and strategies in the comments.
Two Principles of Managing Large Classes

• Provide structure

• Build community
Providing structure means defining the different parts of our classes, our activities, and our assessments.
Why?

• Clarity matters
• Increased diversity = increased needs
• Efficiency
• Student responsibility

Providing Structure
Diversity:

• Use visual support through text and images
Telling students how to arrange the room

- Sit in pairs with one partner facing the screen
- Make Groups of Three
- Make Rows
Providing Structure

Example: Giving instructions

Clarity:

• Plan instructions in advance
• Break big instructions into smaller steps
• Check students’ comprehension of instructions before they begin a task
Providing Structure

Example: Giving instructions

Efficiency:

• Give students opening and closing sentences for their work
• Tell students what the closing signal will be
Giving clear instructions

• Role play rules
• Opening sentence
• Closing sentence
• Directions – What did you understand?
Role Play Rules

- Don’t stop talking
- End when the teacher turns off the light
- Use the opening and closing sentences
Opening Sentence:

*Pat:*

“How should we celebrate Tom’s birthday?”
Closing Sentence:
Robin:
“I’m afraid I have to go now. Let’s talk about this some more tomorrow.”
Directions- What did you understand?

Who is Robin? Raise your hand if you are going to be Robin

Repeat the directions in your own words:
- What will you be trying to do during your conversation?
- Who talks first? What do you say?
- When do you stop talking?
- Who talks last? What do you say?
Clarity:
• Rubrics show how assignments will be graded

Efficiency:
• Rubrics make grading easier

Student responsibility:
• Students can use rubrics to assess themselves

Example: Grading with rubrics
## Paragraph Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph has a topic sentence.</td>
<td>Yes 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic sentence contains a topic.</td>
<td>Yes 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic sentence contains a controlling idea.</td>
<td>Yes 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph has a sentence that explains how example relates to topic.</td>
<td>Yes 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph has one example of topic and controlling idea.</td>
<td>Yes 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph has a concluding sentence that restates topic sentence.</td>
<td>Yes 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL:**

Adapted from: [https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/teachers-corner-making-meaningful-assessments#child-2140](https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/teachers-corner-making-meaningful-assessments#child-2140)
Two Principles of Managing Large Classes

• Provide structure
• Build community
Building Community

Questions
What makes a strong classroom community?
How can we build community in large classes?
How can building community help us to manage large classes?
Why?

• In a large class, students may feel like they don’t matter.
• Instead, we should help students feel like they are members of a valuable community.
Building Community

How?

• Use students’ names

• Be inclusive

• Form fixed groups
Why is it important to know names?

• Helps build relationships
• Helps classroom management
• Helps students to feel known and important
Using students’ names

• Student profile cards
• Make learning names a priority
Noah

Samantha
Secrets of learning students’ names

• Remember: Students appreciate it
• Dedicate class time to it
• Class photo
Name: __________________________  Idioms and Vocabulary Quiz: September 16, 2014


Turki ___  Rika ___  Shiori ___  Mohammed ___

Mossab ___  Takaya ___  Sofiah ___  Yuya ___
• Embrace the diversity of a large class

• Teachers can make students feel like they belong
• Make your activities accessible for everyone
• For example, avoid making the colors red and green important, because some people cannot see the difference
Building Community

- Hear from a variety of students in every class
  - Don’t lecture too much – interact
  - Don’t call on the first person to raise their hand
    - Give students thinking time
  - Use *think-pair-share*
  - Call on students in their groups

Be inclusive
Building Community
Question:
How do you help students be productive in groups?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Member 1</td>
<td>Member 2</td>
<td>Member 3</td>
<td>Member 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ducks</td>
<td>Elephants</td>
<td>Giraffes</td>
<td>Zebras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Zebras</td>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td>Cats</td>
<td>Horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mice</td>
<td>Gophers</td>
<td>Moles</td>
<td>Voles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Birds</td>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>Sharks</td>
<td>Tigers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Panthers</td>
<td>Bison</td>
<td>Anteaters</td>
<td>Snakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rabbits</td>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>Frogs</td>
<td>Cows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Anteaters</td>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>Coyotes</td>
<td>Coyotes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Next: Make a seating chart to show at start of class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Front left</th>
<th>Center</th>
<th>Front right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Back left</th>
<th>Center</th>
<th>Back right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Give groups 2-5 minutes to work together as part of the opening routine

1. Discuss the three sources you brought to class today
2. Decide how to work together in the next stages of making an outline
3. Thursday HW – Finish the outline, on a shared document in the cloud
Support group work

• Design activities so students need each other to complete them
• Make students individually accountable
• Don’t assume that students have the necessary social skills
Summary

Provide structure

• Be clear
• Support diverse learners
• Use efficient assessments
• Help students take responsibility for their own learning

Build community

• Use students’ names
• Be inclusive
• Form fixed groups
Thank you!

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