

## **Classroom Management Stance**

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TLED 640: The Management of Learning and Instruction

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July 27, 2025

### **Classroom Management Stance**

I believe in a student-centered classroom filled with engaging activities and critical thinking scenarios, all designed to prepare students for real-world success. Instructors must guide students into meaningful engagement with course content (Milner et al., 2019), and I strive to do exactly that by helping them connect with material in ways that inspire growth. The statistic that “one high school student drops out every nine seconds” (Lehr et al., 2004, p. 7) reminds me that some arrive in higher education holding onto a last chance at success. My goal is to empower and encourage those students to keep going.

I often tell them they’re like butterflies, unique, full of potential, and capable of transformation. Just as a caterpillar becomes a butterfly, students enter with diverse strengths and emerge with the skills, confidence, and compassion to be impactful dental professionals. My role is to nurture, guide, and challenge them so they can spread their wings in both their careers and communities.

### **Beliefs About How Students Learn Best**

The heart of my teaching comes down to three things: reflection, engagement, and community (Milner et al., 2019). I’m big on reflection, for both my students and myself. At the end of each semester, I review course evaluations, make changes, and bring those improvements right back into the classroom. Students notice when you listen to their suggestions, and that builds trust. I also model reflection by having students journal about their week, set goals, and sometimes share their thoughts with me or each other. Even a quick 10-question peer reflection every few weeks helps create a caring, supportive learning space (Milner et al., 2019).

Engagement is non-negotiable. I use strategies like Gallery Walks that get students moving, talking, and learning from one another. These activities require everyone’s participation

and help students discover ideas they may have missed in lecture (Himmele & Himmele, 2017). It's active, memorable, and fun.

Finally, community is everything. My dental hygiene students spend two years together, and my dental assisting students spend one. I want them to leave with professional relationships that will benefit them long after graduation. Dentistry is a small world, and those connections matter. I create a safe space where mistakes are learning moments, feedback is growth fuel, and everyone's voice matters. Whether feedback comes from me, peers, or across disciplines, I use the "positive-constructive-positive" method to ensure students leave encouraged and ready to improve (Himmele & Himmele, 2017).

### **Classroom Management and Leadership Practices**

My classroom management approach is centered on creating a respectful, student-driven learning environment where expectations are clear and consistently upheld. I believe that I should establish the norms and rules, but also have students suggest any additional ones that would help them excel in my classroom. By having students co-create some of the rules and norms, it provides a humanistic view and establishes mutual respect, as I am not there to control but to promote a sense of community (Milner et al., 2019). The "Simple Syllabus" is printed for the students and reviewed at the beginning of the semester to establish what is expected of them. As an acknowledgement of this, they complete a quiz that requires the student to sign electronically, indicating a complete understanding of the classroom expectations (Bettis, 2025).

I believe in restorative discipline, where students' mistakes are viewed as opportunities for reflection and personal growth (Milner et al., 2019). I rely on natural consequences because my students are preparing to become healthcare professionals, where real-world outcomes often stem directly from their actions. My discipline system will follow an escalating response plan,

beginning with a one-on-one meeting with the student, progressing to a meeting that includes the program director, and ultimately involving the Dean of Health Technologies if necessary. I will encourage students to invite a parent or guardian to attend these meetings, as accountability is often strengthened through the support of loved ones. Open communication among all dental faculty is essential; therefore, we will utilize Navigate to document incidents and identify behavioral patterns, ensuring consistency, fairness, and shared responsibility (Bettis, 2025b).

### **Classroom Arrangement: Visual and Description**

The classroom visual I created is more than a design, it's a student-centered environment that reflects my teaching philosophy and management plan, offering a comfortable, supportive space for engaging activities. I envision flexible seating, allowing students to choose chairs that best support their learning (Waleske, 2020). My plan includes rolling chairs at student tables, yoga ball chairs, bean bags, and soft carpet seating. As someone who struggles to focus without a comfortable seat and table, I understand the value of this choice.

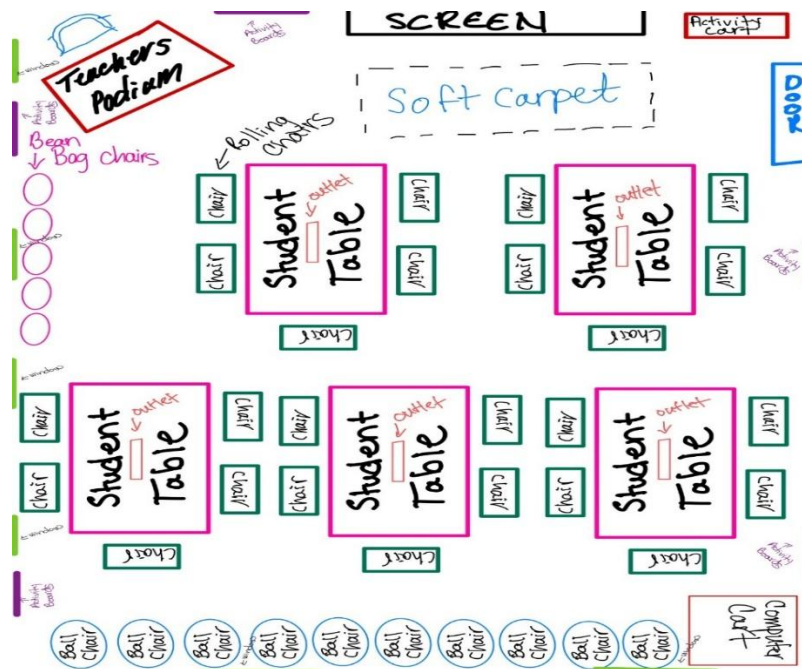
I actively engage students by walking around the room with a clicker, a practice inspired by student feedback. When seated, the podium will be at the front to maintain eye contact. Students will sit at square tables facing forward for instruction but arranged for easy group interaction. Whiteboard activity stations with magnets will be spaced for comfortable movement during pair or group work.

Each table will have a central outlet with both plug and USB ports, eliminating the need for students to leave their seats to charge devices. A back-of-room computer cart will provide laptops for those who prefer them, ensuring flexible learning options.

Natural light is a priority. I've chosen a corner classroom with windows on two sides, as research shows it can “improve moods, increase alertness, and enhance academic performance” (Empathy School, n.d., p. 1). This environment will keep students alert, engaged, and ready to learn.

**Figure 1**

*Illustration of Classroom Environment Visual*



### Conclusion

My classroom management approach is rooted in a student-centered philosophy that blends high expectations with meaningful support. I design engaging activities and critical thinking opportunities to prepare students for real-world success, especially those who may be holding onto a final chance at education. Like butterflies, each student has unique potential, and with guidance, challenge, and encouragement, they can transform into confident, compassionate dental professionals. My goal is to create a respectful, connected classroom community where every student feels seen, supported, and ready to succeed.

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