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Classroom Management Strategies for Teachers- The Adjourning or Ending Stage Andrew Fuller

This is the fifth & final paper in this series. Previous papers discussed the 'forming', 'storming', 'norming' & 'performing' stages of classroom lifecycles.

Transitions are times of loss as well as times of opportunities.

We often don't mark the ending or the completion of our important relationships well. This can deprive us of the rituals that signify we are leaving one way of being & entering another. Observing the rituals of transition points in our lives deepens our sense of meaning & helps us to be aware that we will be entering a new phase with different demands & opportunities.

Acknowledging that you are passing through a threshold helps us all to develop & grow. The challenges & opportunities of the next year will be different than those faced this year.

While it is good to have celebratory rituals, we also need to take time to reflect on how the past year has changed us, what we have learned & how we can use this year to develop even further next year.

If we rush this time of year we risk insufficiently acknowledge the importance of the people who we have shared time & experiences with. Endings are just as important as beginnings.

Ending well

Ending involves the break-up of the class at the end of the year. Students can move on to new things, feeling good about what's been achieved. You can start to prepare for a well-earned break.

Recognition of & sensitivity to different student's vulnerabilities is helpful, particularly if students have been closely bonded to you or to one another or feel a sense of insecurity or threat from this change.

Students may feel a mix of sadness or a sense of loss about the changes coming to their class as well as pleasure in their achievements. Given these conflicting feelings, class morale may dramatically rise or fall at various times throughout the ending stage.

While ending, some class members may become more sensitive & less focused on tasks & their productivity may drop.

Effective ending assists students to take away the best of their experiences to apply in the future.

What you will see during the ending stage

During the Ending Stage, the energy & focus of some students may drop.

It is important to remember that for some of your students their only experience of relationships ending has been dramatic & disastrous.

Other students may find focussing on learning at hand is an effective response to their sadness or sense of loss. Their productivity may increase.

What you may feel during the ending stage

It is a mixed time of the year. You probably feel exhausted, run off your feet, pleased with what has been achieved, excited about having a break, as well as sad about losing a connection with your students, all at the same time.

Make sure you get enough sleep. There is little point frantically rushing to the last day of the school year & then collapsing in an exhausted heap & being sick for most of your holidays.

Try to plan to have the end of term, mentally end in the middle of the last week so you & your students have a few days to unwind before the break.

Students may feel a variety of concerns about the class's impending dissolution. Some may be feeling anxious due to uncertainty about their individual next steps or future friendships.

They may feel sadness or a sense of loss about the changes coming to their relationships. At the same time, students may feel a sense of satisfaction at their own accomplishments.

It is highly likely that at any given moment students will be experiencing different emotions about the class's ending.

What your priorities are, during the ending stage

The end of the year creates a natural review point for everyone. While any year is a mix of highs & lows, encapsulating the past year into a dominant narrative can be helpful.

Some useful questions & discussion points might be:

When you look back on this year what would say was the hardest time? (Often students find it easiest to express their most negative experiences first).

I'm sorry that happened, did it change?

If it hasn't changed, what have you learned from this year about what not to have in your future?

If it has changed, how did you change it?

What did you do first? What worked best?

What worked best for you this year?

Was there a highlight or a best moment?

How did that come about?

How do you think you could make more of that happen next year?

What did you learn about yourself this year?

What parts of yourself changed? (You may wish to highlight a positive change you have noticed in each of your students).

It may then be useful to do a complete review of the year from your own perspective, highlighting particular contributions or moments month by month (ensure you mention every student in your class!)

The class needs to acknowledge the upcoming transition & the variety of ways that each student & the entire class may be feeling about the class's impending dissolution.

During this stage, the class should focus on three tasks:

-Ending well by completing any final work.

-Evaluating the classes' process, with a particular focus on identifying 'lessons learned'.

-Creating a closing celebration that acknowledges the contributions of individuals & the accomplishments of the class.

Effective ending assists students to take away the best of their experiences to apply to their future as well as setting them up for a great next year

	Connect	Protect	Respect
Forming	With each student individually build relationships & a sense of belonging. Connect with what they have that is their own contribution to make.	Their self-efficacy & self-belief. Some students have a history of despair about their abilities & lose motivation. Be the antidote by protecting their hope that they can succeed.	That they will develop from this stage of the year to grow into a more mature form of themselves. Interact with them in a way that indicates they have an infinite potential.
Storming	Know that storming feels hard but is a sign of growth. While thinking about group processes, preserve your individual relationships with students.	Their sense that they have a contribution to make that is unique to them. Differences are to be called upon & celebrated.	That they have to resolve peer issues in order to feel safe enough to learn. Respect that your own sense of kindness will eventually prevail.
Norming	Implement routines, protocols & rhythms of the day that create a sense of dependability & security.	Guard students who appear to be anxious or avoidant & help them to develop a resilient mindset. Calm the agitated & directly link with the avoidants	That they will need short bursts of fun, movement & social interaction interspersed into learning times, to maintain levels of belonging & enthusiasm. Keep energy levels high
Performing	With students as they learn best, their learning strengths & their interests.	Don't just cover content, develop skills. Deepen their ability to research, think about & discuss ideas. Develop problem solving skills & creative thinking.	The practices you instil at the stage set them up as successful learners for life.
Ending	Connect with the best of what has happened throughout the year.	Their successes & accomplishments. We miss a golden opportunity if we can't take the best of our achievements from the past year into the next.	They often have unexpressed apprehension about the next year. Reassure them that this year sets them up well for next year. Respect yourself for all that you have done this year.

More information

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Andrew's website

www.mylearningstrengths.com has helped over 45,000 young people in the past year discover their learning strengths.

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Learning Strengths

Books for Parents

Unlocking Your Child's Genius

Tricky Behaviours

The A to Z of Feelings (Bad Apple Press)

Books for Teachers

Guerrilla Tactics for Teachers (e-book)

Neurodevelopmental Differentiation- Optimising Brain Systems To Maximise Learning