

STANDARD 4: CREATE AND MAINTAIN SUPPORTIVE AND SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

(4.1) Support student participation

Identify strategies to support inclusive student participation and engagement in classroom activities.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

(4.3) Manage challenging behaviour.

Demonstrate knowledge of practical approaches to manage challenging behaviour.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

During my first practicum, I developed and delivered a Year 9 music lesson focusing on musical texture at a secondary state school in Brisbane's southern suburbs. This lesson occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, with approximately 90% of students engaging in remote learning. Consequently, the in-person class comprised only ten students, predominantly children of essential workers. This unique context emphasized the importance of managing challenging behaviours and fostering engagement to maximize learning outcomes.

Strategies for Engagement and Behaviour Management

To enhance engagement, I employed evidence-based strategies, such as cold calling and peer collaboration, within the lesson design. Cold calling, where students are randomly selected to answer questions, ensures active participation and enhances accountability (Dallimore et al., 2006). This approach aligns with research suggesting that engaging students through active questioning promotes attention and deepens understanding (Walsh & Sattes, 2011).

Peer collaboration was another central strategy, designed to foster dialogue and encourage collective problem-solving. For instance, when a student posed a question, their peers were invited to respond. This approach builds a sense of shared responsibility, which is particularly effective in small group settings (Gillies, 2016). Peer collaboration also supports social-emotional learning by helping students develop communication and interpersonal skills, which contribute to a positive classroom environment (Standard 4.1).

Proactive lesson planning was critical to mitigating challenging behaviours. Marzano's (2007) model emphasizes the importance of clarity in lesson objectives and expectations. For this lesson, clear learning goals were communicated through direct instruction, visual aids, and comprehension checks, ensuring that students understood the purpose and requirements

of the activity (Artifact 1). Clear expectations reduce ambiguity, which can be a common trigger for behavioural issues (Standard 4.3).

In the classroom, positive reinforcement was employed to maintain a productive learning environment. Students who demonstrated understanding or provided insightful answers received praise, reinforcing desired behaviours and fostering intrinsic motivation. Research by Conroy et al. (2009) highlights the effectiveness of positive reinforcement in reducing disruptive behaviours and increasing engagement. This approach aligns with a strengths-based perspective, emphasizing students' capabilities and achievements.

To cater to the diverse needs of the class, multimodal teaching strategies were implemented. These strategies, including visual demonstrations and interactive discussions, are particularly effective for students with diverse learning needs, such as those on the autism spectrum or English as an additional language/dialect (EAL/D) learner. Multimodal approaches leverage multiple sensory pathways, making content more accessible and engaging (Walsh et al., 2015).

Outcomes and Reflections

The strategies employed resulted in a highly engaged and well-behaved class. Students actively participated in discussions, asked insightful questions, and demonstrated their understanding through formative interactions and summative assessments submitted at the end of the term.

Reflecting on this experience, I recognize the importance of continually expanding my repertoire of classroom management strategies. This will involve ongoing professional learning, such as workshops focused on positive behaviour interventions and evidence-based pedagogical practices. Additionally, journaling and collegial collaboration will allow me to analyse and refine my approaches.

As I progress from a pre-service teacher to a proficient educator, I aim to adeptly manage diverse classroom behaviours and support colleagues in fostering inclusive and engaging learning environments.

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