

# Inclusion Tools for After School Professionals

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## SNIPPET #17 Classroom Community 2.0: Re-Launching your Classroom Management Practices

This SNIPPET outlines the efforts of two after-school program leaders. Some days, their programs feel successful, but many days the students are disengaged despite thoughtfully planned, developmentally appropriate activities. Claudia leads a combined group of first and second graders, many learning English as a second language and also living in a predominantly low-income neighborhood. David leads a group of eighth graders in a very large school that serves much more diverse family backgrounds.

Establishing solid classroom management practices to foster a warm, inclusive, and functional community is important at any time of the year, but a school break is the easiest time to “re-launch”. If your environment is not what you hoped, you’re feeling frustrated, or the young people in your program seem disconnected, follow these steps to launch your own Classroom Community 2.0.

### STEPS FOR “RE-LAUNCHING” YOUR CLASSROOM COMMUNITY:

#### 1. Develop a Vision

Begin by writing down a vision. What would be an awesome day for your group? What are the young people doing, saying, hearing, feeling, and learning? How does it feel for you? Explore the

*Learning in After School Principles* <sup>1</sup> and the *Expanded Learning Collaborative* <sup>2</sup> for ideas.

**Claudia:** Children are solving the inevitable everyday conflicts peacefully with their words; they have many fun opportunities to read and write; and they feel physically and emotionally safe. I’m using clear, direct, respectful language with the children.

**David:** The teens are working in groups to create engineering projects: problem solving together, planning well but also being flexible. I’m calm and not raising my voice, and the kids are showing respect by using encouraging language with each other and handling the tinkering tools safely.

**Tip!** Share your goals with someone. A supervisor, a trusted colleague, or even a friend who works in a different field can help you develop your vision just by listening.

## **2. Reflect on Your Practice**

Next describe areas of strength and growth in your program, as you mentally walk through the day from arrival to departure. How about when young people are learning and engaging positively with each other and with you? What does it look like when learning is not happening, or when negative interactions are occurring? Notice transitions, student groupings or partnerships, materials, types of activities, and other variables. If possible, take a few minutes out of your day or ask a colleague or supervisor to observe.

**Claudia:** *Once we have an activity going, they're engaged, talking about the books they are reading or actively playing our game. But transitioning between activities, like snack, is a mess.... By a "mess", I mean that kids are running in the hallway, jostling each other in the room, and I have to shout over them to give directions for the activity. In all that chaos, Sammie, who has ADHD, will start yelling at other kids or me.*

**David:** *My group really likes the engineering/tinkering that we do. I have the materials out in bins already and a routine for each small group to get started independently, and that works pretty well, but the way they talk to each other! There's so much negativity and meanness from some, and then others just shrink into the background (especially Joe, who is on the Autism spectrum).*

## **3. Make a Plan**

Celebrate the ways your program or class already reflects your vision. Then, make a plan to address the gaps between your vision and the current reality. Review this simple [classroom management checklist](#) <sup>3</sup> and note the strategies already in place.

Then, pick two to three strategies to add to your classroom that will make a difference right away. Claudia started with establishing expectations and

**Respectful relationships – among young people and adults – are the most important part of building a successful community.**

logical consequences. David already had those in place, so his first step was introducing *quiet signals*<sup>4</sup>.

David and Claudia both wrote out their plans, thinking about the following questions, and then reflected on them after trying them out:

- **How will I introduce the new expectations or routines?**

Both began by asking the young people to talk about how the community feels to them, and leading a brainstorm about how to make it more productive and comfortable.

- **How will students practice the new expectations? How often, for how long?**

Plan on significant amounts of practice for your re-launch to “stick”: every day for at least a week, then every other day.

***Claudia:** I said, “It’s important that everyone feels safe and has fun. What do we do that helps people be safe?” I took notes on the whiteboard while they brainstormed, and then helped them turn those into classroom expectations like “use kind words”.*

I knew we would need to practice every day, so I made a game out of transitioning and a plan to play it every day for the first two weeks after break. The class tried to beat its record and got really fast! After the first day, I started reminding them of one class rule each day and then describing how they followed it during the transition.

**Tip!** Usually, the young people will come up with insightful solutions, and you just have to guide them a little.

***David:** We started with a moment of silence, like always, and then the students got in small groups to write down ideas about how to have a more productive workshop. They had great ideas! Then we hung them up and walked around to read all the ideas. Since a lot of them wanted to spend more time on engineering projects and less time listening to directions, it was an easy “sell” to introduce a quiet signal.*

*I knew I would need to practice the quiet signal a lot. I also planned to have really cool activities so they would be motivated to stop talking and get going so they’d see how much more time we had for fun.*

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**Tip!** If homework time is one of your challenges, read a [SNIPPET<sub>5</sub>](#) or [tipsheet<sub>6</sub>](#) on homework.

#### 4. Follow Up

Be consistent in using your strategies, and monitor your progress. Revisit your vision regularly, and notice any growth on the classroom management checklist. Are your program participants more engaged? Are they learning more? How are you feeling about your job?

**Tip!** Get support from your supervisor and use the resources below.

#### Links :

1. Learning in After School Principles (<http://www.learninginafterschool.org>)
2. San Francisco Expanded Learning Collaborative Resource Guide (<http://sfelc.org/publications-and-tools/resource-guide>)
3. Classroom Management Checklist (<http://www.buildingonthebest.com/classroom-management-checklist.html>)
4. Quiet Signals (<http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol6/608-anderson.aspx>)
5. Homework SNIPPET (<http://www.snipsf.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/SNIPPET-14-Homework-2.pdf>)
6. Homework Tipsheet ([http://www.snipsf.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/ CVS-Tipsheet-\\_Inclusive-Homework-FINAL.pdf](http://www.snipsf.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/ CVS-Tipsheet-_Inclusive-Homework-FINAL.pdf))

#### Other Resources:

- SNIP Tipsheets: Rethinking Behavior, Power of Positive Messages (<http://www.snipsf.org/tips-tools>)
- Link to classroom management podcast ([www.baytreeblog.com/zenofbehavior](http://www.baytreeblog.com/zenofbehavior))

#### About the Author

Alexis Filippini, PhD, has a brand new classroom management podcast at [www.baytreeblog.com/zenofbehavior](http://www.baytreeblog.com/zenofbehavior) or [www.buildingonthebest.com/resources.html](http://www.buildingonthebest.com/resources.html). She also facilitates learning about literacy, classroom management, and learning differences (including dyslexia and autism) for teachers, out-of-school time staff, and parents, and runs a literacy-infused summer gardening camp in Oakland.