



EDUTOPIA SESSIONS

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT FOR NEW TEACHERS



We believe in you!



Thank you for attending **Edutopia Sessions: Classroom Management for New Teachers!**

Finding your way as a new teacher is challenging, especially when it seems like everyone has their own methods for making things work. That’s especially true for classroom management, where there are so many factors that impact student behavior. We hope the session provided the tips you need to chart a path that’s best for you.

To supplement the workshop discussion, educators [Laura Thomas](#) and [Jay Schauer](#) have assembled additional information for you to consider when developing your classroom management strategies.

Schauer offers a goal for new teachers as facilitators of learning—becoming a “warm demander”—and you’ll learn more about this approach below. He also points to perfectionism as a stumbling block for teachers of all experience levels. The S chart he provides is a helpful visual.

Thomas has compiled some ground rules for delivering lessons. In the sections “The Best Formula Ever” and “Wondering About the Zone of Proximal Development?” she provides ways for new teachers to successfully lead effective lessons and assessments.

Finally, be sure to visit [Edutopia.org](#) anytime you’re looking for help with education’s challenges. The resources there are succinct and helpful and will always be free.

Warmly,

Audra Lynam

[Audra Lynam](#), Teacher



The Teacher as Warm Demander

[Jay Schauer](#)

The term “warm demander” was originally coined by Judith Kleinfeld to describe teachers who, in the words of author [Lisa Delpit](#), “expect a great deal of their students, convince them of their own brilliance, and help them to reach their potential in a disciplined and structured environment.”

Please understand, though, that no one achieves immediate success in embodying this approach. As you establish yourself, you will find parts of your teacher persona that come easily to you and others that take more work. The key is in maintaining the same growth mindset you ask of your students.

 [Check out this list of curated resources.](#)

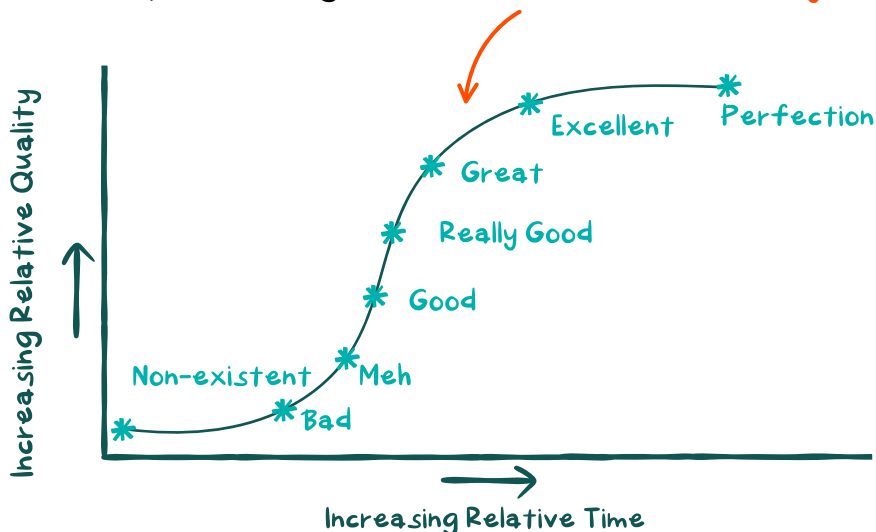
- * For more about warm demanders, Jessica Wei Huang wrote the excellent [4 Practices of Warm Demander Teachers](#).
- * Also, [Becoming a Warm Demander](#) by Shane Safir illustrates the concept and expands it to other educational roles and relationships.
- * Those wanting to see the research should check out this summary of a study of 634 teachers: [Students, Especially African-Americans, Thrive with Warm, Demanding Teachers](#).
- * Finally, I’d be remiss if I didn’t mention Zaretta Hammond’s influential [Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain](#). If you’re looking for a deep dive, this is it.
- * Check out Hammond’s [Warm Demander Chart](#). If you look through the chart’s various descriptors, you may find yourself more strongly represented in one quadrant than in others. If you can recognize the problems associated with being too far on the Professional Distance end and/or the Passive Leniency end, you will also recognize how a Warm Demander maximizes the benefits of Active Demandingness and Personal Warmth. Try to identify which components of the warm demander seem to fit you already and which ones may take a little, or a lot, more effort in the coming weeks, months, years.



The S-Curve of Time and Quality

Jay Schauer

An [April 2023 Edutopia article](#) by Sarah Gonser pointed out how challenging the first years are for new educators who are perfectionists, and I have to say it doesn't get much easier for veterans with that tendency. Rookie or not, you're going to have to be at least comfortable with some things being "good enough for now." To that end, I'm sharing the **S-Curve of Time and Quality**.



As a newer teacher, you must recognize that there is no way to alter the space-time continuum. You will never have enough relative time to improve the quality of all the tasks on your plate from "nonexistent" to "perfection." Hopefully, for some tasks you're already in the "really good" to "great" range, and you and your students can enjoy those as is or put in a little time to get to the next level. Perhaps your school uses a curriculum that needs only a little fine-tuning, or you're on a team with resources they are happy to share.


...and that's okay!

On the other hand, you may be building everything from scratch, and nearly everything is starting at the "nonexistent" end of the Relative Quality axis. The time to get things to just "good" may be twice as long as turning something from "good" to "great." If you have perfectionist tendencies, that "good" may seem like failure, but you may have to live with it for a while, because if you put as much time as it takes to get that one task to "perfection" you may have three or four other important things that are still sitting in the "nonexistent" stage, and that's a problem.

Am I suggesting you settle for mediocrity? Absolutely not! By all means, make things the best you can with the time that you have—and then make them better the next time.

Also, as you gain experience lesson planning, creating and scoring assessments, communicating with students and parents, and so much more, you will become more efficient over time, especially if you're open to learning from others about how they shorten that relative time axis for any given task. That means you'll get closer and closer to that "perfection" you crave in the future.

Finally, more often than not, many teachers' "really good" is actually pretty outstanding, because we tend to be hard on ourselves.



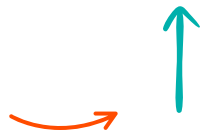
Read that again... "many teachers' 'really good' is actually pretty outstanding, because we tend to be hard on ourselves."



The Best Formula Ever

[Laura Thomas](#)

Add high social complexity



Social Complexity
The social expectations and requirements for meeting them.



to low form predictability



Form Predictability
Knowing what's going to happen next.

and you get



Stress Reactive Behaviors
Fight, flight, flock, freeze, appease.

So do the opposite!

We've all had that class—the one where nothing worked. Maybe it was a day or all year, but there was just something that kept the students from doing the cool stuff you'd planned. The wheels just kept coming off, no matter what you did. I've been there. And it's just... ugh.

I believe that [people do well when they can](#), and if they can't, it's because there's something in the way. But what? That's where the **BFE—Best Formula Ever** comes in. (Thanks to Kim John Payne and his Center for Social Sustainability for this!) Ready? Hold onto your hats because this is going to shake some things up in your classroom.

Let's look at the formula in more detail.

 These are the variables you'll be working with.

Social complexity is about relationships and how clear, changeable, or unpredictable they are. Uncertainty around social standing, appropriate behavioral expectations, and norms can create socially complex situations. “Where will I sit? Will anyone like me? Will the teacher be nice? Will I have friends today? This week? This year? Which brands are cool or uncool today? Are my clothes right?” You remember those questions, right?

Form predictability is about the logistical details of our day-to-day lives. These are predictable when we can anticipate the sequence of events we will experience and the actions we are expected to take in order to be successful: where to put coats and backpacks, where to sit, where to go for lunch, how to open a locker, and what the agenda for the day will be—and how dependable that agenda is from day to day and week to week.

Stress reactive behaviors—fight, flight, flocking (cliques), and freezing (kid in the back of the room with the hood up)—are reflective of the level of fear in any given situation. Everyone knows about fight or flight, but freezing and flocking are less well known. All of them are based in fear, and neurologically they all make it impossible to learn.

So: High social complexity + low form predictability = stress reactive behaviors. Now, this isn't a static equation. Over time and with experience, you'll find that you can decrease the predictability—mix it up a bit!—and that the kids are better able to manage social complexity. You've built a community they can depend on to keep them safe so they can handle bigger risks—and that's exactly what we're going for.

If things just aren't working, check your social complexity and form predictability. If you can decrease the former by [building and maintaining community](#), by [setting and enforcing behavioral expectations](#), and by making sure your students really know each other and increase the latter by making your [processes and structures transparent](#) and by [making sure your expectations are clear](#), you may find that you can get rolling again.

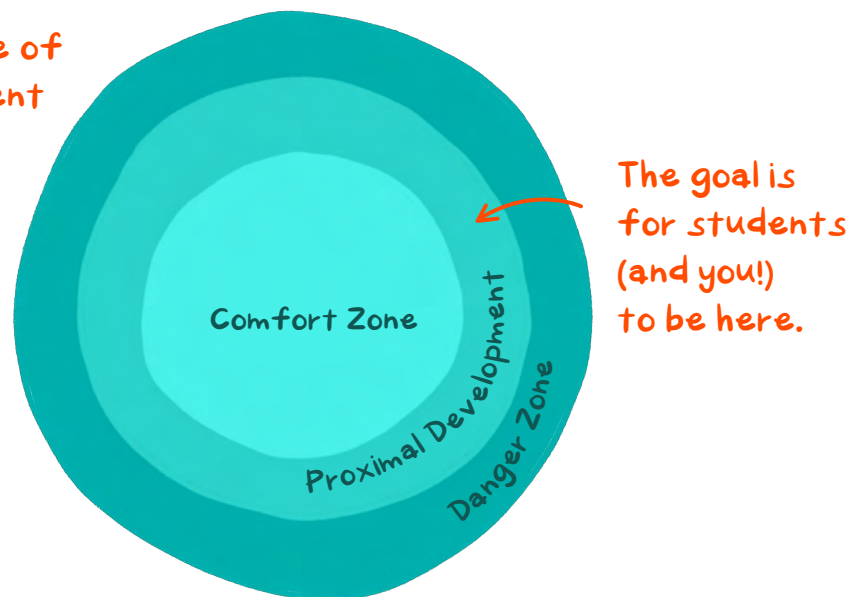


Wondering About the Zone of Proximal Development?

[Laura Thomas](#)

[Lev Vygotsky's zone of proximal development](#) is a way of understanding one's experience as a learner, and it's just as applicable to you (the teacher-as-learner) as it is to your students. [Awareness of it](#)—and what we see, hear, and feel when we're in each of the different zones—can help guide us in instruction, reflection, and lesson planning.

This shows the Zone of Proximal Development



- * The center—the comfort zone—is the place where one feels completely unchallenged. At best it's relaxing and at worst it's boring.
- * The second area is the zone of proximal development, where one feels challenged but still safe. The risks one takes in this zone feel manageable, maybe exciting, even if they are a bit of a push.
- * The final ring is one's danger zone. This is the space where one is too stressed and frightened to engage with anything beyond stress and fear. When one is working in the danger zone, the amygdala takes charge, and fight or flight runs the show.

It's very difficult for the prefrontal cortex or the hippocampus to operate effectively when we are in our danger zone—and it doesn't matter if we're the teacher or the student. When we are in either the center or the outer rings, you may see the same kinds of behavior issues because both boredom and anxiety can create similar outcomes.

Reflect on the past few days or weeks. Are you doing the same things you've been doing—things that used to work but suddenly don't? Consider boredom to be the issue and try to increase the level of complexity of the work. Just getting started? You may be going too far, too fast. Scale things back and see what happens. It's always better to go backward—more structure, more support, less complexity—if you aren't sure that students are understanding a lesson.

What about you? How are you feeling? Does the unit coming up scare you? Bore you? Are you feeling pressured to implement strategies you don't feel confident in? Pushed to take kids out into the community when you aren't sure they're ready? Aren't sure you're ready? Sometimes the issue is not even school or what's ahead instructionally—it can be the stressors that come with being a human being. If you've been sick, if you're overwhelmed, if you're struggling with mental health concerns or family dynamics, you can decide to change your instruction based on your needs. Your zone of proximal development matters too.



**Tip: Write this
on a sticky note
and stick it on
your desk!**