

## Implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work

### What does the pedagogical practice of implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work consist of?

The practice of implementing norms and routines for discourse and work consist in explicitly stating, modeling and setting up in the classroom the ways of building up knowledge specific to each discipline. At the heart of this practice is the conviction that content and method are inseparable. To learn a specific content, it is required to understand its own method. The teacher's task is to teach his or her students the norms and routines used by the professionals of each discipline. Only when students behave like mathematicians, scientists, historians, artists or athletes will they deeply understand each one of these disciplines.

For scientists the observation and description of phenomena, the laying out of hypotheses, the collection, analysis and interpretation of data, and the construction of models are particularly important abilities (NGSS, 2013). Also, typical of sciences are certain attitudes such as the curiosity for explaining the phenomena, the interest for discovering something new and the perplexity towards inconsistencies (Jaber & Hammer, 2016). These abilities and attitudes should be explicitly stated and modeled by those teachers who teach sciences. Thus, in the science classes an inquisitive environment must take precedence, which celebrates the capacity to wonder, meticulousness in analysis and perseverance against failure. To achieve this, it is required to establish norms and routines that allow for the generation of a scientific environment.

Historians must organize, select and analyze information; judge the credibility of the sources; compare versions and points of view that compete against one another; identify frames and structures that contribute towards clarifying the information and look for evidence to justify the selection of those structures. Furthermore, historians are constantly searching for patterns that associate and elucidate events and circumstances from different time periods (Bain & Mirel, 2006). History teachers must promote norms and routines that help students listen attentively to different points of view, debate around them and provide evidence to justify their opinions.

Artists utilize different languages to creatively communicate their perceptions, ideas and personal imagery. For this, they observe and reflectively analyze universal or contentious topics. Then, they take a stance, elaborate a narrative, imagine and create individually or collectively. Art teachers must generate room for students to “learn by doing”, so that in the process they experiment, feel satisfied, correct themselves and get excited.

Considering that each area of knowledge has its own particular ways of functioning, in addition to certain cross-cutting elements, the teacher should also foster the establishment of norms and routines to cultivate these elements effectively.

A key one is the disposition towards learning, which has been systematized as “productive mental habits” (Marzano & Pickering, 2005). Self-regulation habits make our actions more conscious and controlled. An example of which is planning, evaluating the effectiveness of actions and to be sensitive to feedback. Critical thinking habits help our actions be more reasonable and sensible towards particular situations and towards other

people. An example of this is the search for precision and clarity. Critical thinking habits help us think and act in a more flexible and less restricted way. An example is to deeply compromise with the tasks and to create new ways of observing a situation.

## What is not implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work?

- This practice does not refer to potentiating norms of behavior associated with the management of the classroom. Although the implementation of behavioral norms is important, this practice refers to the encouraging of mental habits that characterize the professionals who work on each discipline or else, those who work across disciplines. Therefore, it must not be mistaken with having children follow norms such as raising their hand to speak or respecting turns.
- Neither does it refer to encouraging identical practices in all subjects. Although there are some mental habits that are used in almost all disciplines, an explicit effort must be made to reinforcing the acquisition of those habits that are specific to each discipline. Ideally, students will be able to recognize, for example, that an artist's way of thinking is different to that of a mathematician.
- This practice does not refer only to abilities, but also to attitudes and affective dispositions. The different disciplines are characterized by promoting particular attitudes, such as curiosity and precision in sciences, and appreciation and creativity in arts.
- This practice does not assume that students will naturally adopt the abilities and attitudes that are expected of them. On the contrary, teachers must offer explicit instruction about the norms and routines that are being looked for. This implies that teachers will have to plan activities in which habits unique to the discipline become visible. For example, the value that an artist gives to the process that goes from the mock-up to the final presentation will only be able to be taught by art teachers if the work they ask from their students follows that same process. Likewise, math teachers will not be able to teach their students the value that verification has for mathematicians if they never ask for verification in the exercises in class.

## Strategies

- Once the abilities and attitudes to be developed are selected, include in the planning the norms and routines that allow for their acquisition. The majority of the habits that characterize professionals are the result of long hours working in their discipline. Consequently, teachers must destine time for students to adopt these habits. The explicit instruction must be accompanied by multiple opportunities of practice within the classroom. For example, if what you look for is for students to develop the habit of thinking critically, in particular when it comes to seeking precision, a routine must be installed of declaring the sources of information being consulted. If you wish that the students develop the habit of self-regulation, in particular to evaluate the effectiveness of their actions, the routine must be installed that when finishing a challenging task, students reflect from questions such as: next time, what would I do the same? and what would I do differently?
- Explicitly state through real models those norms and routines that we want to act on. Teachers can model the norms and routines and they can also support themselves with visits from professionals in the subject's area or videos that show professionals in action. Modeling should suppose the explicit instruction of the different steps that must be carried out in order to adopt certain habits. For example, to encourage in students the habit of checking many times what they have written, just like authors do, teachers can plan the writing lessons as a process along several lessons, rather than an isolated event

where you start and finish what is to be written in the same class. Students must have opportunities to understand why those habits are relevant and for observing what the teacher specifically refers to when talking about certain habits.

- To go back into the history of the discipline and to share anecdotes. The ways in which professionals do their job today is consistent with the historical way in which every discipline has been developed. Teachers can tell anecdotes about experts in the discipline in order to explain their students why certain habits are essential. For example, a science teacher can explain how and why the atomic model has changed over time.
- To reinforce the attitudes and expected behaviors, and align all the components in the class with the habits that we want to instill. Teachers must positively reinforce the practices that they seek to establish in their students. To do it, they must ensure that the ways in which they speak to their students and the class routines are aligned with those habits. For example, in math, a teacher must celebrate when the student is capable of explaining the reason behind a result, even if it took him or her longer, rather than praising when he or she arrives a quick answer without understanding why. Likewise, given that what is unique to musicians is to dedicate many hours of practice to each piece, it would not be coherent to evaluate students without first encouraging in them the same dedication. Furthermore, if we want to encourage self-regulation habits, moments in which a student proves to have adjusted his performance according to the feedback he received must be reinforced. Also, to restrict the impulsivity, students must be taught to stop for at least 10 seconds and to think, before answering or asking a question or trying to solve a problem. Moreover, the action must be modeled alongside the behavior itself and those instances must be reinforced in which students manifest it.

## References

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