

MANAGING THE CLASSROOM



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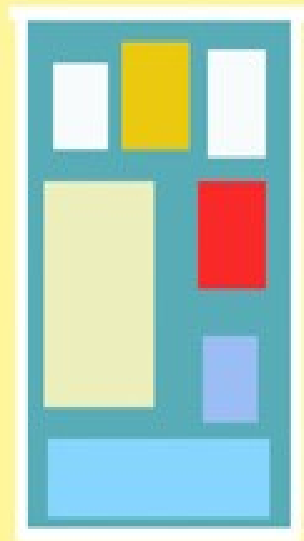
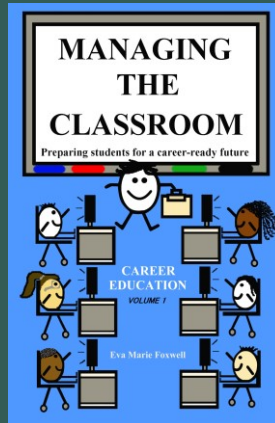


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Introduction

Most 7th through 12th grade schools have incorporated business-based curriculums; however, many instructors lack the business experience necessary to create realistic context for their lesson plans. This leaves students unprepared to establish a strong foundation for hands-on experience in the workforce. I believe that we can better prepare students for the technology demands and the fast-paced professional environment that they will experience in the workplace.

But what does “career-ready” *really* mean? After working in business and management for over 20 years, I’ve come to define a career-ready individual as a person who can make decisions, problem-solve, engage in critical thinking, analyze situations to overcome problems, and set goals.

Grounded in these basic skills, I have developed a business curriculum that can be adapted to any classroom and any age of student. This manual differs from other classroom management guides in one prominent way: I manage my classroom by directly tying it to the curriculum. My students walk into my classroom, which transforms itself from a standard computer lab into a bustling and productive business environment.

In this manual, I will show you how to lay the groundwork for your own classroom and provide you with examples to create as realistic of a career-ready environment for your students as possible.

I’m doing this because my primary goal in teaching is to make education a memorable and enjoyable experience for all students so that they can walk the path of success. If I had to condense my entire philosophy into a bulleted list that I would ask other

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teachers to internalize and employ in their classrooms, it would look something like this:

- **Hands-on learning keeps students interested**—The more the students are engaged with learning, the more they want to learn. Getting them excited about learning through hands-on activities ultimately helps them retain more information.
- **Connect with your students**—The best way to tell if your student is understanding the material and succeeding is to monitor them as well as engage with them. Understand that all students learn differently and need to be taught based on their specific learning styles. Analyze each student to know how they best learn and retain information.
- **Strategize, adapt, modify, change**—The business world demands that you be flexible. If something isn't working, you don't let it continue to fail. Instead, you develop a new plan and you fix it. In much the same way, if a student isn't succeeding or engaging with your material, you must develop and implement a new strategy. Sometimes it takes a few tries to find a tactic that works. (You'll see an example of a strategy I use to help struggling students in differentiated instruction.)
- **Tell stories**—In my class I tell stories, lots of stories. I talk about times I've failed, times I've succeeded, and times I felt nervous in addition to unprepared. I share my experiences with my students because they can learn from me just as your students can learn from you. Even if you don't have many real-life experiences to

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share, get creative so you can identify with the students. Whether the story was real matters little compared to whether the students learned something important from the story.

- **Provide real feedback**—Students are reviewing comments and I am encouraging constructive dialogue during class times. These are crucial feedback mechanisms from which you can help students identify areas of growth and weakness. Help students recognize their mistakes and work with them to identify strategies to improve. Also, no student is perfect; you aren't doing any favors to the students who are already succeeding if you don't push them to be even better.
- **Tell the students you care**—Sometimes students have this idea that teachers don't care about their education. Prove them wrong! Remind them of it all the time. You may be surprised at what a difference this can make. Simply add statements such as, "You know I really care about your future so I am teaching you skills that will make you stand out as a performer. I know what you need to succeed and that's exactly what I am trying to do. Please know I have your best interest in mind and I want you to shine." When you share these sentiments in your conversations with students, you begin to develop a nurturing relationship with them. When they think you care, they care, too.
- **Have fun**—I never want my class to be boring. All of my lessons include hands-on activities and "live" scenarios to actively engage students with the curriculum and with each other. Through these activities, my students gain an in-depth understanding of what it's like to work in a fast-paced environment with a focus on

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time management, leadership, and organization. It's incredible to discover the students' level of performance when they understand the material, care about the results of their work, and have fun in class.

- **Continue learning**—It is so crucial to stay abreast of all the changes in your field by taking education classes. By pursuing your education, not only will you be more knowledgeable, you will also provide your students with the best learning experience.

Throughout my time working as a business teacher, I have spoken to students outside of my school district and asked them what they were learning in business or technology. After hearing about their experiences, I have come to realize business skills are not being taught effectively enough in the classroom. I knew I needed to share the experiences in my classroom with other educators.

I have an opportunity to help other business teachers, elementary school teachers, middle school teachers, high school teachers, and other educators understand life in the business world. I also want to give them access to all of my materials. That is why I was inspired to create a multi-volume series that I will revise to keep up with new trends in business. I feel that writing various manuals to target specific lesson groups will reach a larger audience; more teachers will be able to utilize the curriculum and achieve success for themselves and their students.

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How This Book is Organized

This manual lays the groundwork for developing a successful and practical course for the development of career-ready students. This classroom management strategy can be adapted into any environment with students of any age. While I provide specific examples (and more lesson plans in accompanying editions as well as online), you should tailor your class to their needs and available resources. The goal is to provide you with classroom management techniques and blended learning activities to simulate ‘real world’ experiences that improves student learning and retention to ultimately provide the necessary skills in order for students to excel in any occupation.

Callouts Used in This Book

Throughout this manual you will see four roles used as “callouts” to indicate specific types of information that will give you a quick reference to the topics listed below.

Boss	This callout indicates an example of something I would say to my students as their boss. These examples are designed to give you a look into how I speak with my students in the classroom and how I explain certain business topics. You should always tailor your own speech to your comfort level and to the needs of your students.
Manager	This callout is when the students are demonstrating their role as the manager for their specific job positions.

Student/ Employees	This callout describes the responsibility of the students within the classroom.
Tips	This callout is specific information that I want to draw your attention to more closely. These tips will provide more in-depth information or a practical application of the subject being covered in that section.

Terminology you'll see throughout this book

Throughout this text I will consistently use certain “buzzwords” that have a specific meaning in my classroom. In an effort to help you understand them and their implications, I’ve created a list of the most common buzzwords I use and their meanings.

Additionally, I have also included some industry words and their exact definitions because they might be slightly different than your understanding of the word.

Tip: I also make sure that my students understand these terms because I often use them when I want them to complete a task.

1. **Transitioning** is a time when the students have to effectively move from one place to another without wasting time. In the business world, it is important to be respectful of customers; students must be very quiet as to not interrupt “customers” who are on the telephone line with our representatives.

2. **Directives** are instructions dictated by management aimed at causing effective production to occur. Students (i.e. employees) must stop whatever they are doing and listen attentively to their manager to demonstrate respect and an eagerness to assist.
3. **Announcements** are when managers provide specific information about an activity that affects all or most of the people working in the classroom. Care should be taken that announcements are not to be made needlessly so they do not continuously interrupt work.
4. **Business soft skills** are skills associated with a person's emotional intelligence. It consists of a cluster of personality traits, language, communication, approachability, personal habits, and optimism that represents relationships with other people.
5. **Producing at a high-level** means students will consistently be working and focusing on the tasks and projects assigned. It means that students are effectively completing assignments within strict time constraints.
6. **Manager vs boss vs teacher** is the person who has the most seniority or authority and is responsible for all final decisions made for the team. While these roles are usually fulfilled by the same person, each role has slightly different goals, objectives, and responsibilities.
7. A **syllabus** explains grading, expectations, and assignments for the students. This document should be distributed and explained to students on the first day of class.

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8. ***Student job responsibilities*** are the tasks that students have as part of their job assigned to them for the classroom. These are reviewed in depth in Part III.
9. ***Organizational binders*** are the binders that I have my students bring to every class where they place their work so they stay organized. I periodically check the layout of these binders to enforce good organizational habits.
10. ***Time is money*** is a phrase I use frequently to remind students that when time is wasted, it costs money. The goal is to make students aware that they are “being paid” to complete assignments and that they must work productively.
11. ***Business world*** is used to generally describes and includes the culture and environment of commercial operations or companies.

Student Learning Outcomes

In a business environment, there are hard skills and soft skills—in my classroom, I teach both. In this particular manual, I emphasize the soft skills because often times that is what is lacking most in the classroom. The soft skills in focus throughout this manual are

- Communication and how it plays a huge role in performing your everyday job responsibilities.
- Time Management and its part in managing your task list, meetings, and assignments effectively throughout the day in order to meet deadlines.
- Respect and Fairness and how it is necessary for the morale of the team.
- Teamwork and working together to accomplish the goals as well as objectives of the company.
- Leadership and taking the initiative to assist others, lead others, and set a good example for people to follow.
- Persistence and the benefits of ensuring the assignments get completed no matter how long it will take.
- Organization and the ability to be able to find and access information quickly.

Many of these skills will be mentioned several times throughout the text and it is important to note the different contexts in which they are used.

A Special Note on Communication Skills

I have found that in recent years face-to-face communication skills have diminished even in younger students due to electronic devices. They often don't know how to converse appropriately during basic conversations. It is my goal to leave them with a conversational skill set that will ingratiate them with their future employers and have an overall positive impact for the rest of their lives.

I teach my students the following skills to become better conversationalists.

- Greetings
- Appropriate eye contact
- Facial expressions and other nonverbal indicators of active listening
- Appropriate verbal responses
- Deferring judgement and determining the appropriate time to ask questions
- Closing statements

When developing your course and throughout the school year, pay attention to the needs of your students. If your students come into your classroom able to communicate well (or if they learn that skill quickly), adjust your plans to focus on their weak spots. Perhaps time management will plague your students, maybe it's teamwork, or something else entirely. Remember, you must model business world behaviors and that means being able to adjust, improve, and adapt!

Successful Students

Success is an important topic that I continually discuss with my students. One of the best measures of success in the classroom is whether your students are meeting the student learning outcomes that you've established. You will know when your students have achieved the student learning outcomes when they

- Understand all classroom expectations and communicate effectively by demonstrating strong emotional intelligence.
- Demonstrate strong time management by completing assignments within the time allotted.
- Emulate respect and fairness to their boss, their coworkers, and others.
- Initiate teamwork to accomplish more assignments.
- Act according to directives administered by the boss and act as a leader to their peers.
- Persist through difficult assignments.
- Exhibit organizational skills by jotting down notes and maintaining an organized class binder.

I have found in my many years in business and teaching that achieving personal success is similar to walking on a path. Each step gets you closer to or further from your goals. Much like a path in the woods, the road to success is not always straight and well defined. I think it is crucial for my students to understand this concept so I take time to explain this to my students. I do this through wisdom excerpts like the one below.

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Boss: “Walking the path of success is an important long-term goal. Life is like walking on a path. You may venture off the path and make mistakes, but overall as long as you learn from those mistakes, you will be able to get right back on the path and continue achieving success. I want to emphasize that making mistakes is acceptable and makes you stronger individuals. There isn’t a single successful person that achieved success without making any mistakes. If anything, they made many mistakes and ultimately it made them stand out and become better at what they did.”

How students feel about class is important. If your students are bored, intimidated, or feeling negatively about your class, they will not learn successfully; they will not retain as much information. It can be difficult to mitigate how students feel about your class while also providing a challenging curriculum.

I find that the primary reason my students like the classroom environment I create is because it gives them responsibility and makes them feel “grown up”. It is important to recognize why your students enjoy (or do not enjoy) your class. I have found that in my classroom the more responsibility I give them, the happier they are overall simply because they have a purpose. Specifically, students have told me that they like

- Having specific jobs that they are responsible for every day.
- Having jobs with expectations and responsibilities.
- Participating as leaders in team meetings.
- Voicing their opinions to make suggestions and/or improvements to the performance of class or to a specific project.

- Having the freedom to assist other students at any time during class in order to stay on task as a team.
- Making important decisions for the increased production of the team.
- Understanding the importance of organization and how it plays an integral role in their performance.

Take note about what motivates your students to respond and what gets them excited. Again, manipulate the lessons and practices in this manual to fit your students and your classroom. The more you modify your lesson plan, the better it will become in the long run.

When you implement the methods and practices that I have laid out for you in this text, your students will learn much more than the standard curriculum.

- They will be more aware of time and how they are spending it.
- They will understand the importance of customers and their relationship to job stability.
- They will learn to complete assignments for their boss that are neat and organized.
- They will understand how to take pride in their work.
- They will learn to identify problems and find reasonable solutions.
- They will understand how to be patient and practice self-control.
- They will understand how their overall behavior relates to the boss' perception of them.

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- They will understand the need to demonstrate a positive attitude.
- They will gain confidence in their abilities.
- They will understand the importance of being responsible.
- They will understand how to emulate respect.
- They will learn to work together as a team.

You might even find: quiet students become outgoing; troubled students find a purpose to excel; followers become leaders; negativity becomes positivity; complaining becomes proactively finding solutions; questions become more purposeful; and students become more self-reliant.

A Note on Differentiated Instruction

There are many cases where differential instruction is needed, and in my classes I assign mentors to the students who are struggling. There are several reasons that this can be a successful arrangement, but it is important to incorporate this situation into the classroom appropriately.

After explaining the importance of teamwork to my students, they know that they can assist one another as needed. As the manager I encourage students to converse with others if someone needs assistance. This is where I explain about the principle of “I can, you can, we can” to help them understand that it’s not always just about them individually, it’s also about working together as a team.

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Boss: “Working together as a team is crucial in effectively achieving goals and assignments for the business. You may not necessarily like everyone in your group, but you must focus on the end result of the assignment that your boss is asking you to complete and simply get it done. There is no time to complain since there are always time limits associated with production.”

Given the nature of the classroom, you will need to monitor these interactions very carefully and ensure that the mentor is still able to complete his or her own work on time. I have had great success with this method and I often see increased production from both students.

I have found that by using peers to bridge a learning gap, confidence increases with the struggling student and the mentor feels important. I am also constantly assisting students in need of additional help throughout the lesson.

I explain to my students that everyone learns differently and it is my job to find the most effective ways to make learning successful for each student. It is very helpful for the students to take the time to understand their own learning style, and I provide an example of those lessons plans and activities in this manual. I explain to them that if they understand their learning style, they can increase their productivity (thus decreasing the amount of time and effort that it takes to understand a concept or complete an assignment).

To help them determine their learning styles, I have each student take a computer assessment to understand if they are a visual, audio, or tactile learner. I also use the information about their learning styles to substantiate my lesson plans. I know it is more difficult and time consuming to teach that way and time is often on the short side, but I find that putting in the effort to tailor my lessons makes my students more successful and helps them enjoy learning. In my classroom, I find that there is consistently a high

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percentage of tactile learners so my overall hands-on learning approach is geared towards them. I always ensure that I accommodate the other types of learners by using visual aids and oral communication as well. The students become more confident and want to produce at a higher level because they are being taught in the most effective way.

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