

Talk less. Teach more!
NONVERBAL CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
Group Strategies that Work.

A book for teachers written by a teacher: Pearl Nitsche

*Teachers are seasonal workers, whose tongues get tired and wear out
long before the other parts of their bodies!*

We talk and talk and talk ... and very often we are frustrated by the feeling that our students simply aren't listening. It has been proven that over 82% of a teacher's communication with his or her students in the classroom is NON-VERBAL! Why should we waste our breath on the classroom process rather than use it for our content?"

Speaking less and at the same time teaching more is the goal of nonverbal classroom management. By systematizing our nonverbal behavior, our teaching and our classrooms become more efficient and respectful. We are freed to use our voices for what we actually became teachers to do - to teach!

The theory and the techniques introduced in this book are based upon the tenets of NLP - NeuroLinguistic Programming - an approach developed in the 70s in California by John Grinder and Richard Bandler. NLP is a collection of techniques, patterns, and strategies that assist us in effective communication, personal growth, and learning and enables us to better understand our own thinking processes and our interaction with others.

Identifying Learning Styles

Our five senses, which are also called modalities, represent our doors to reality. The strength of each individual modality varies from one person to the next. The way we perceive what is happening around us and the way we interpret this in our minds determine our own very personal picture of "reality." According to Michael Grinder, who has specialized in NLP in education, this modality preference, as well as the age of a child, determine his learning or communication style.

There are, for example, pupils who exhibit a visual learning style. They hold their bodies straight and motionless and they learn with their eyes. Their motivation to attend school is to learn. (At times we may wonder why there are so few of them in

our classrooms! ☺) They like to philosophize and they are often perfectionists. The visual development phase begins around the age of 14.

Students who exhibit a strong auditory learning or communication style learn through speaking and listening. Their body movement is rhythmical and symmetrical. They are very sociable and they love to talk! Their main motivation for going to school is relationships - relationships with other students and with you. The auditory developmental stage takes place between the ages of 10 and 14.

Students who are kinesthetic learners are little bundles of energy. They are constantly in movement and they touch everything. Their movements are asymmetrical and away from the torso. They have strong physical and emotional reactions and are easily distracted from the task at hand. They go to school because of relationships. They are lovely people - but strenuous! The kinesthetic developmental stage takes place from birth to around the age of 10.

A teacher, who recognizes her students' nonverbal signals, can use the techniques presented in this book to effectively communicate with individual, sometimes hard-to-reach, students in her classroom by matching the student's modality as well as reach the entire class by teaching multi-modally.

The four phases of a lesson

In addition, effective nonverbal techniques are provided for the four phases of a lesson:

- Getting the class's attention at the beginning of the lesson (and keeping it!)
- The teaching phase of the lesson. This includes topics such as getting students to raise their hands, capturing students' attention during the lesson, nipping situations where it could become necessary to discipline in the bud and, if it should become necessary, respectful, nonverbal disciplinary measures
- Elegant transitions from the teaching to the seatwork phase
- Seatwork. Nonverbal techniques for getting them to work, moving through the classroom and speech patterns during classwork.

THE PRINCIPLES OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

You are always communicating

Professor Albert Mehrabian, a pioneer since the 60s in communication research, determined during a communications project for the University of California that there are 3 factors that influence the effect a conversation has. These are:

- 7% verbal = the words which are spoken
- 38% vocal = how these words sound, and
- 55% visual = how you look when you say them.

That comes to 7% verbal and 93% nonverbal!

Other more conservative studies estimate that the nonverbal part of communication equals about 82%. An impressive percentage - one which teachers, who want to have success while teaching, should definitely take into account!

In other words: If more than 82% of your communication is NONVERBAL, it follows that what you say is often not nearly as important as HOW you say it!

Not only that, but it stands to reason then that, if over 82% of communication is nonverbal, we are constantly in the process of communicating - whether we are speaking or not. It is simply impossible NOT to communicate.

Congruency

Very often though we are not aware of the nonverbal signals we send. We send messages that do not conform to our own expectations or that result in incorrect expectations in our students. Then we are surprised or disappointed when our students do not follow our directions or react in expected ways.

How often we overhear statements in the teachers' room such as, "I've told him so many times. He just doesn't listen!" Nonverbal messages are much stronger than verbal ones. Our students tend to "listen" and to react to our nonverbal "statements" and not to hear our words. These nonverbal messages, which are being expressed on an unconscious level, are much "louder" than words. If a verbal and a nonverbal message are in conflict, the student will ALWAYS react to the nonverbal message - and then we are angry because he has not listened to our words.

It is important that we become aware of our intuitively correct behavior in the classroom.

A very common reaction to the nonverbal techniques I present in my teacher training seminars is often a surprised, "Yes! Exactly! I do that all the time!" This is the moment when I know that the training has been successful.

Making the Unconscious Conscious

Each of us knows intuitively how to teach effectively. And we generally do that, too. But because we are teaching according to the way it "feels right," we often do not use this intuitive knowledge systematically. The result: Sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn't. We leave our success up to chance.

It is only when we understand WHY it works - when our unconscious behavior becomes conscious - that we have gained a dependable tool that we can use consciously and systematically in the classroom.

Scene

*Just imagine that I am standing before you.
My posture is tense.
My arms are crossed in front of my chest.
I have a grim frown upon my face.
My voice is dripping with sarcasm as I say the following words:*

"I'm glad that you are reading this article."

Do you believe my words?
Probably not!

And now imagine that I am standing in front of you and my posture is relaxed and open. My hands are stretched out in front of me. They are held parallel to the floor and the palms are facing upward.

Scene

*I am smiling at you and I say in a warm and friendly voice,
"I'm glad that you are reading this article."*

That was better, wasn't it?

The first time I was **incongruent**.
My nonverbal message contradicted my verbal one. Therefore, my words, although well-meant, were not credible. The communication - for which I, as the sender, am responsible- was not successful. The result: the exact opposite of what I actually wanted to express!

The second time I was **congruent**.

My verbal and my nonverbal messages corresponded. Therefore I got my message across and you believed my words.



Let's look at another example:

Imagine that I want my students to write an essay. We have discussed all the details and I have listed them on the board. All of the important questions have been answered and I would like my students to start writing.

*My verbal message:
"Now we will begin.
No more questions, please."*

Quite clear, isn't it? Or perhaps it isn't?

The words are unambiguous.

But whether my directions are followed or not is a question of my nonverbal messages and whether my words and my nonverbal messages correspond. It is a question of congruency. How is my posture? My facial expression? What does my voice sound like? Those are important factors that determine whether my directions will be followed or not, how others react or interpret my intentions.

It is important for teachers to know that nonverbal messages are always stronger than verbal ones. Therefore if a teacher's nonverbal and verbal messages conflict, the verbal message will be ignored and the nonverbal one followed.

The class reflects the teacher's behavior.

Upon hearing this, some teachers respond, "But then I won't be authentic. I won't be myself."

Possibly that is true. But as a teacher you cannot always allow yourself to be totally authentic. We have a job to do. This job is to lead a class. And if for a moment you take a step back to better observe yourself and your class's behavior, you will notice that the class is a mirror in which you can observe yourself.

One of the most important principles of nonverbal classroom management is that

That means that when you are lively, your class is lively.

When you are calm, they are calm.

When you talk a lot, you will have a talkative group.

If you notice that a class behaves differently when you are teaching it than when your colleagues are, ask yourself the question, "Is the class mirroring me?"

As long as the class's behavior is congruent with your goals in the classroom, this is fine. But if this is not the case, you need to change your own behavior to match the results you would like to achieve. You set the tone. The class mirrors you.

Does that mean that we can never be ourselves in the classroom?

No, it doesn't. We can be authentic - but at the right time. In order to be yourself in the classroom, it is first necessary to create an environment in which this is possible.

If I come into the classroom and I want the students to be quiet, I have to be quiet myself. Before I can move on to my own authentic behavior, I need to set the scene and create the necessary atmosphere. In other words, every good teacher is an actor or an actress.

A teacher needs a rich palette of techniques to deal with all of the challenges that a typical school day presents. "Talk less. Teach more! Nonverbal Classroom Management. Group Strategies that Work" provides you with the techniques you need to give you more choices in the classroom. Having choices gives you more flexibility and puts you in control. You can manage the classroom nonverbally and use your voice to teach. You can be the teacher you are meant to be!

Are you interested? Would you like to read more?

You can download a free sampling of my book at www.pearls-of-learning-press.com.

You can order it by sending an email to pearlspress@zbzoom.net
or you can direct questions to me personally at pearl.nitsche@chello.at