Before we begin to learn specific instructional strategies, it is important to address issues of classroom management that make learning possible.  An environment that is wrought with disorganization, no control over student behavior, no regard for routines, space, time, or student motivation are not environments that are conducive to learning.   Teacher behavior in regard to these topics is purposeful and deliberate and intended to create a community of learners where all students can be successful.  Effective teachers communicate to their students that each one is welcome and has a place of belonging in the community.  Effective teachers create an atmosphere where students feel safe from psychological harm as well as safe from physical harm.  You will want to think about the amount of competition that is a part of everyday life in our schools.  Creating an environment where there are winners and losers (particularly when the same students repeatedly are the winners) impedes student motivation and creativity.  Students shut down academically and sometimes act out behaviorally.  Not that an occasional spelling bee is not an engaging activity but consistently rewarding the smartest, the best, and the brightest significantly impacts how students at the margins see themselves and their levels of competence.

Robert Marzano in his on-going studies of what works in school offers these research based action steps for effective classroom management and creating a safe and orderly environment that is conducive to learning:

1) Have teachers articulate and enforce a comprehensive set of classroom rules and procedures,

2 )Have teachers use specific strategies that reinforce appropriate behavior and provide consequences for inappropriate behavior,

3) Have teachers develop a balance of moderate dominance and moderate cooperation in their dealings with students, and

4) Have teachers employ specific strategies to maintain or heighten their awareness of the classroom (withitness).

**Johnny Won’t Sit Down!**

In your classes you are bound to run into the student who will not stay seated. What   should you do? Is the student Attention Deficit Hpyeractivity Disorder (ADHD)? What’s the student’s problem? Or is the child already diagnosed with a learning disability   or attention disorder? No matter what, you need help. Who should you see?

In most schools there is a specialist who can help you with students who have special needs. Perhaps it is a case of having someone observe to see when the student has the most difficulty focusing. It could be a subject matter that is difficult for the student. Or it could be the time of day. Maybe the student needs constant breaks. It could be a vision or hearing problem that has gone unnoticed. There are many reasons to call a specialist in to help you find a way to help the student be successful in the classroom learning environment.

**Me no HablaEspanol!**

Ok, now we have students who speak different languages and are from different cultures in our classrooms. How do I set up my classroom environment to encourage them to participate? Some cultures like to work in groups while others prefer quiet solitude. It is important to learn about your students, their culture, and prior learning experiences. Not only this, but there is a person at your school or in your district/corporation who is specialized in working with non-English speaking students. Here is your liaison!

**Gregory is finished with his work in record time!**

Gregory is a challenge. He is probably the best student in the class. He is well behaved and so eager to please. All of his work is completed perfectly, without error. The problem is, he is done almost before the other students begin. I don’t want to just give Gregory more work. I want to challenge him.

Talking to the school psychologist, we decide to assess Gregory and find out he is Gifted. Because of budget cuts, there are no special classes for Gregory. I am going to have to accommodate him in the regular education classroom. Great! How do I meet Gregory’s needs? Luckily, Gregory is good about working independently and can follow written directions. Still, who do I go to for help? I am already differentiating for all of the other students in the class! Make sure to check with your curriculum specialists at your school or in your district office to help you find challenging work for Gregory.

**Sally has a processing problem!**

Now we are on overload! We have to make accommodations in our learning environment for the student who needs more breaks, the student who does not speak English, and now we have a student with special needs. What do I do? How do I accommodate for a student with learning disabilities? Remember your specialist? Yes! You will need to collaborate with the specialist at your school site to meet the needs of the student with learning disabilities. The specialist can help you find the right place in the classroom; the best grouping situation for collaboration, and more.

**Victoria is ummm different!**

A new student arrives in the classroom. You have already made accommodations for all of your students with special needs but this one is different. She seems withdrawn and at the same time distracted. Little noises cause an odd reaction such as covering her face or running out of the classroom. The resource teacher says that Victoria has an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Your classroom and presentation style now have to change to allow Victoria to be fully included. Luckily the resource teacher is there to help you! Again, collaboration is the crucial key to successful inclusion of students with a variety of special needs.

You will engage in some reading that should help you understand that you can establish yourself as the authority figure and have effective classroom control while still creating a classroom environment that is fun and inviting for all types of diversity.  As a matter of fact in creating a community where dignity and respect abound and having different learning needs is viewed as normal and not broken, you will encounter fewer behavioral issues of disruption in the classroom.  Were you aware that most new teachers who leave the field in the first 3 to 5 years do so because they are frustrated with the difficulties they encounter with student behavior?  Understanding the importance of creating a community of learning that is devoted to learning for all students will help you avoid being one of these unfortunate statistics!