Classroom Management Strategies for Students Affected by Forced Migration: The Healing Classrooms Approach

Strategy Tip Sheet

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# Strategies for strengthening relationships

Fostering friendships

» Strategically pair and group students you think might get along for group work during class

» Change seating arrangements periodically to give students the opportunity to interact with different classmates. Make sure to let students know that this is going to happen.

» Make time each day or week for peer affirmations and expressions of appreciation.

» Integrate academic and social emotional learning games to both teach and create space for positive relationship development.

» Encourage students to join or start clubs or other school activities based on shared interests. Be aware you might need to communicate with caregivers to help students explain and get permission for these activities.

CHARACTERISTIC SUPPORTED
» *Meeting emotional needs*
» *Positive, empowering group management*

PROMOTES
» *Positive relationships*
» *Sense of self worth*
» *Sense of belonging*
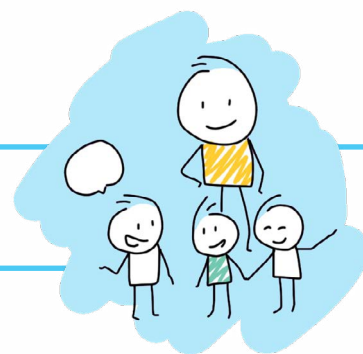
Facilitate student to student mentoring

» Buddy systems can help new arrivals feel safe and supported in unfamiliar environments.

» Mentor buddies should receive training about the services the school provides, how to report concerns, brief information about the student, and key steps to being an effective mentor.

» Introduce the program to student mentees and ask for their consent to participate. Let them know what to expect and how to report any concerns, check in frequently, and facilitate closure to the formal mentoring relationship.

» Rewards and certificates can be used to amplify the significance of the program. It may also be beneficial for newcomer students to have multiple buddies to diversify interactions with peers and distribute mentoring responsibilities.

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Learn, Affirm, Validate & Connect

» **Learn:** Be curious and seek to learn about your students, their cultures, and the education system(s) they have experienced. Ask what matters to them.

» **Affirm:** Show your students that you see them, and they matter. Offer a simple, warm gesture of respect (a smile, a fist bump, a good morning) every day – regardless of what happened yesterday.

» **Validate:** Listen to understand. Acknowledge their experiences, challenges, and perspectives matter. Share your belief in their resilience and remind them that you are there to support them.

» **Connect:** Have short, informal conversations with students about non-academic topics, but also set aside time to meet with students to talk with them about their goals and help them recognize their progress through examples.

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» *Intellectual stimulation*

Ungraded dialogue journals

» Ungraded dialogue journals another method for getting to know your students better.

» Provide a notebook. You start by writing a short letter to the student. Ask the student to respond in their preferred language. Try one entry every two weeks.

» Leverage translation apps to read students' entries if needed – even questionable translations are just opportunities for more dialogue!

» If you have a lot of students, prioritize those you need to connect more with. You can also rotate the journaling activity with subsets of your students.

CHARACTERISTIC SUPPORTED
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PROMOTES
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» *Positive relationships*

Interpretation and translation tips

Interpreters convert meaning between languages *orally* or *visually* (e.g. sign language) while **translators** transfer written material from one language to another.

» Make sure you understand your school or organization's protocol for requesting interpretation and translation.

» Do not ask siblings or other students to serve as interpreters for sensitive information

» Avoid using idioms, slang, or highly technical terms that interpreters and translators may not be familiar with and may not translate correctly.

» Do not say anything you do not want interpreted.

» If you need to have a conversation on a sensitive and/or technical topic (like a behavioral concern or testing), have a preparatory conversation with the interpreter to give them the opportunity to ask questions. This will help ensure accurate relaying of meaning.

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Caregiver collaboration

Reach out within one month of school starting or within two weeks of a newcomer student joining your class, then consider making a schedule and setting calendar alerts to remind you to check in regularly for the following reasons:

» **Orient:** Take time to offer a thorough orientation to your class in the families' preferred language so they know what to expect, how to support their child, and feel more confident doing so.

» **Update:** Caregivers may feel nervous and uncertain how their child is doing. Update them on what their child is doing well and what challenges they are facing. Be aware that some families will be more prepared than others to help with school work and be ready to brainstorm different ways that students can get help.

» **Explain:** Parent-teacher conferences, report cards, book fairs, soccer tryouts… Newcomers can be overwhelmed by the amount of information sent home from school. Reach out to highlight important deadlines, or events that may be of particular interest to the family.

» **Seek insight:** Caregivers are often an important source of insight into your students. Ask questions early. What are their children good at? What do they need help with? How do they learn best? When challenges arise, reach out with curiosity and care.

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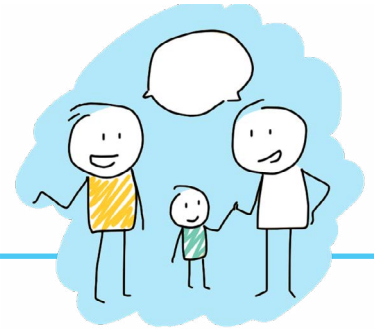
Culturally responsive and sustaining caregiver interaction

» While seeking to learn about the cultures of your students' families is important, it's okay not to know everything. Approaching families with humility, respect, and openness is just as important.

» Show respect for caregivers' cultures and preferences while avoiding making assumptions about what their preferences are based on cultural norms or stereotypes.

» Pick communication methods that work for both you and families. Caregivers with low literacy may prefer a phone call or home visit. Others may prefer WhatsApp, a school-based app (like Class Dojo), or email.

» Arrange for interpretation if needed.

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MINIMIZE STRESS AND CONFLICT

Reduce triggering content or activities

WHAT
Avoid unnecessary distress by limiting triggering activities, subject matter and materials.
When unavoidable, prepare students for their experience with these things.

WHY
Students who have experienced extreme adversity may become distressed by content or activities in school, such as safety drills (e.g. lockdown drills) or studying certain wars or disasters.

HOW
Determine if you can replace/avoid potentially triggering activities.

» Warn students if potentially distressing content will be taught.
» Explain potentially distressing activities before they happen so students know what to expect.
» Offer alternatives or the option to opt out of potentially distressing activities or material, and the option to seek support (such as from a school psychologist or social worker) if students experience distress.

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Precise & concise MVP instructions[1]

WHAT
Positively framed directions that efficiently tell students what to do and how to do it

WHY
Maximize student understanding and minimize student anxiety.

HOW
Follow this format every time:

» Call to attention
   "Clap once if you can hear me"
» Cue to begin
   "When I say go..."
» Movement expectations
   "Turning to face your partner..."
» Voice expectations
   "At a voice level 2..."
» Participation
   "Discuss question 2"
» Narrate to reinforce
   "Antonio is facing his partner..."

CHARACTERISTIC SUPPORTED
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PROMOTES
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» *Self of self-worth*

1   *Adapted from No Nonsense Nurturing*

Accountable talk

WHAT
Structures that help *all* students develop the language to convey opinions, take risks, and ask for help.

WHY
Accountable talk fosters empathy and the ability to engage in constructive dialogue, which is essential for resolving conflicts and understanding diverse perspectives.

HOW
Model, display, and give students the opportunity to practice accountable talk sentence frames:

» "I agree with ___ because…"
» "I understand ___. However, I disagree because…"
» "Could you explain a little more please?"
» "I would like to add on to what ___ said.

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PROMOTES
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» *Intellectual stimulation*

Tackle transitions

WHAT
Strategies to support students to enter the classroom & get ready to begin, switch activities during class, and wrap up and exit the classroom

WHY
Students affected by forced migration may have a particularly hard time changing or maintaining energy and cognitive focus.

HOW
Consider:

» Greeting routines
  Hi-five and a smile as students walk in
» Movement moments
  Students can stand while brainstorming
» Mindful moments[2]
  Students focus their attention on the present moment through activities like body scan, box breath, or mindful listening.
» Assign roles
  Student A – folder handout
  Student B – homework collection
» Transition signals
  Timers, bells, hand-claps
» Student rephrase
  Students repeat instructions in their own words

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[2] *It's important to note that mindfulness can be beneficial for most people but for some people it may not be helpful, especially for those with certain psychiatric problems or histories of trauma. Avoid triggering mindfulness activities by having students select them, always allowing students to opt out, and always providing options within activities – for example, closing one's eyes should always be optional.*

Trauma-informed spatial audit

WHAT
Process to identify classroom organization and decor changes to enhance cultural and linguistic responsiveness and be more trauma-informed.

WHY
The engagement of students affected by forced migration can be strongly impacted by how the classroom feels.

HOW
» Inform students you want to refresh the space; invite them to participate if possible.
» Walk through your space with students and/or colleagues using the Trauma-Informed Classroom Design Checklist provided at the end of this course.
» Identify possible changes to the room layout, visual displays, organization of materials, and aesthetics that improve students ability to see and interact in the space, efficiently meet their needs, and feel affirmed and valued.
» Discuss possible changes with students. Be transparent about ideas that you cannot implement and why.
» If you know or suspect a student has sensory needs (such as high sensitivity to noise or light, tactile needs, …), consult your student support personnel or administration to request support.

CHARACTERISTIC SUPPORTED
» *Predictability & consistency*
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PROMOTES
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A1 Annex 1: Healing Classrooms Trauma-Informed Spatial Design Checklist

MONITOR STRESS AND EMOTIONS

Linguistically responsive check-ins

WHAT
Tools for students to convey their feelings and needs without social or linguistic barriers.

WHY
Giving students the ability to meet their needs and participate regardless of their English proficiency is key to students' sense of control and self-worth. Non-verbal communication methods help students express their needs while minimizing interruption to instruction.

HOW
Hand signals
» Fingers crossed **Restroom**
» 1 finger **"I need a pencil"**
» 3 fingers **"I need water"**
» Y shape **"Me too"** **"I agree"**

Feelings cards
» Green **"I feel good"**
» Yellow **"I feel overwhelmed, unfocused, confused"**
» Red **"I'm getting upset"**

CHARACTERISTIC SUPPORTED
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PROMOTES
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ENHANCE STRESS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Peace corners

WHAT
A physical space in the classroom set aside for students to emotionally self- regulate and reset.

WHY
Learning is impossible for a student experiencing emotional or cognitive overload. Peace corners help students to address this overload rather than trying to ignore it.

HOW
Have students help you create a comfortable space that affords some privacy away from the group. Provide a variety of self-regulation-supporting resources, such as:

» Visual timers
» Journaling supplies
» Coloring supplies
» Multilingual peace cards that describe self-regulation techniques
» Stress release toys

CHARACTERISTIC SUPPORTED
» *Meeting students' emotional needs*
» *Positive, empowering group management*
» *Spatial design to support trauma-informed care principles*

PROMOTES
» *Sense of control*
» *Self of self-worth*

Consequences

WHAT
Disciplinary responses to behavior in the classroom that creates a destabilized environment and prevents learning.

WHY
Holding high expectations of our students and maintaining a predictable environment are crucial to promoting a sense of safety.

HOW
» Establish in advance the consequences students can expect for various disruptive behaviors
» Explain the reasoning behind each consequence
» Apply consequences consistently and in a neutral tone

CHARACTERISTIC SUPPORTED
» *Predictability & consistency*
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PROMOTES
» *Sense of control*
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Restorative questions

WHAT
Questions that teachers can ask students to understand and address conflict.

WHY
Restorative approaches to addressing conflict hold students accountable for their behavior while empowering them to resolve conflict and develop interpersonal skills.

HOW
» "What happened?"
» "What piece can you take responsibility for?"
» "Who has been harmed and how?"
» "What are you going to do to make things right?"

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Strategies for sharpening pedagogy

Content/Language Objectives

- » Content language objectives (CLOs) articulate both what students are expected to know or be able to do, and how they are expected to demonstrate their learning.
- » CLOs should be written in the following format:
  I can/students will be able to (SWBAT) [language function] [content learning] using [language forms] in order to [rationale].
- » CLOs help educators ensure students are learning the language needed to access the content and demonstrate their competency with both.

CHARACTERISTIC SUPPORTED
- » *Predictability & consistency*

PROMOTES
- » *Intellectual stimulation*
- » *Sense of control*

Storytelling and choral reading

- » Because students may come from collectivist cultures, integrating learning activities that may be more familiar can support students to feel more confident and successful.
- » Integrating stories into lessons helps students connect the learning to their own lives and the social context for learning.
- » Choral reading is an activity that emphasizes collective responsibility for learning and participation. In choral reading students read in unison with the teacher, which supports development of fluency and encourages less fluent language learners to participate.

CHARACTERISTIC SUPPORTED
- » *Predictability & consistency*
- » *Meeting emotional needs*

PROMOTES
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- » *Sense of self worth*

Effective checks for understanding

- » Effective checks for understanding are questions that provide useful insight into what students are learning.
- » Open-ended questions that push students to explain their reasoning and avoid yes/no or other binary responses make good checks for understanding.
- » Effective checks for understanding also communicate a teacher's high expectations for students and their investment in their learning.

CHARACTERISTIC SUPPORTED
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Grouping strategy: Pair work

» Students affected by forced migration and other newcomers and multilingual learners need the support of teachers and peers. Learning in community equals more learning than learning alone. English learners will also get more practice using English in comfortable groupings.

» Pair students who share a preferred language to collaborate in a turn and talk learning activity to enhance understanding for both students.

» You can also pair an English leaner and a native English speaker who can model the target language.

» Think-pair-share is a great pair-work technique. Students think about a question alone, then share ideas with a peer, and then the pair shares answers to the whole group.

» Provide a communication checklist with expectations for how to discuss the questions or task and sample question or sentence or starters to accommodate varied language proficiency levels.

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Differentiation

» Differentiating supports equity in the classroom by giving students different paths to arrive at the same goal.

» Differentiating improves diverse students' ability to feel connected to the learning, and to stretch their learning but avoid becoming overwhelmed and shutting down

» Examples:
  » Providing texts of different levels with the same content takeaways to different student groups
  » Scaling the amount that students must produce within a fixed time frame in consideration of language processing time
  » Asking alternative questions that require more or less language-intensive responses to demonstrate mastery of the same essential content

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Scaffolding

» Scaffolds are tools such as visual aids, graphic organizers, sentences starters, and modeling that allow students to complete linguistically demanding tasks and understand challenging content.

» Scaffolds foster an inclusive classroom environment by allowing multilingual learners to participate in the same discussions and activities as their classmates despite differences in language proficiency.

» Scaffolding provides the necessary support as students transition from guided learning to independent use of language.

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A1 Healing Classrooms Trauma-Informed Spatial Design Checklist

The engagement of students affected by forced migration can be strongly impacted by how the classroom feels.

Use this questionnaire to assess your space and identify ways to refresh your classroom design and decor to enhance cultural and linguistic responsiveness and be more trauma-informed. Invite your students to participate in the process!
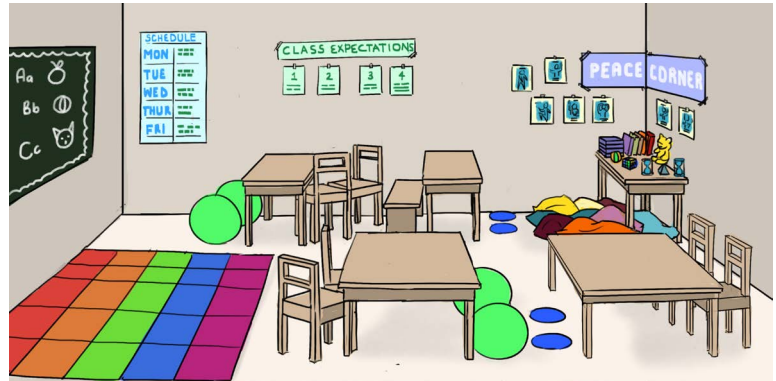
At their seat, do all students have:

	Yes	Partially	No	Notes
Unobstructed view				
Sufficient personal space				
Ability to hear and be heard				
Comfort with those seated near them				

Room layout:

	Yes	Partially	No	Notes
Are there clearly designated movement pathways?				
Do the types of seating and seating arrangements support collaboration and typical classroom activities?				
Can students easily and independently access the supplies and materials they need?				
Is there a Peace Corner or other space inside (or outside) the classroom where students can step away and reset if needed?				

Do visual displays…

	Yes	*Partially*	*No*	*Notes*
Feel sufficient but not overwhelming				
Foster a sense of calm or peace				
Motivate and inspire students				
Foster a sense of belonging				
Validate students' work				
Represent students' cultures, languages, and life experiences of calm or peace				
Reinforce class expectations				
Remind students of schedules and agendas				
Include multilingual labels to assist students meet their needs and classroom expectations				

A2 Lesson Plan Sample

GRADE: 6   **LESSON TITLE:** States of Matter

Content language objective

Students will be able to explain the chemical properties of the States of Matter by using the words 'molecules,' 'energy,' and 'shape' to write a paragraph about how molecules function in solids, liquids, and gases.

Content Language Objectives

GROUPING STRATEGY

» Arrange desks so that students are easily able to work in pairs.
» As feasible, pair entering and emerging English Learners (EL) according to shared language.

Grouping Strategy: Pair Work

Key instructional practices

TIME	LEARNING ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES, DIFFERENTIATION & SCAFFOLDING	
10-12 min	**Instruction ("I do" – teacher models)** Teacher asks what students remember about the previous day's introductory lesson on States of Matter and reviews the states of matter. **Turn and Talk:** Teacher prompts students to turn and talk to brainstorm a story about how water can go through all 3 states of matter. **Whole Class Discussion:** Students raise their hands to share their examples. Teacher prompts accountable talk discussion to gauge and promote understanding. **Review objective:** Teacher asks 2 volunteers to read the CLO of today's lesson **Preview vocabulary:** Teacher (pre)views key vocabulary: shape, energy, molecule. Teacher leads choral reading of definitions and sentences using the words. Students write down definitions in their notebooks. **Video:** Teacher shows short video on molecules and the states of matter	**Scaffolds:** » Slide with opening question translated into ELs' preferred languages » Slides with images illustrating each state of matter and translations into ELs' preferred languages » Accountable talk sentence stems on the wall » Slides with images illustrating atoms/ molecules and translations into ELs' preferred languages	**Scaffolding** **Storytelling / Choral Reading**
1-2 min	**Transition** **Call to attention:** If you can hear me, clap once. If you can see me, clap twice. When I say go, each student in the front row please silently come to the front, collect today's worksheet, and hand it out to the students behind you.	**Scaffolds:** » Demonstrate clapping motion » Point to the students in the front row.	

TIME	LEARNING ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES, DIFFERENTIATION & SCAFFOLDING	
10-12 min	**Guided Practice ("We do" – shared practice teacher and students)** **Whole Class:** Teacher displays the "State of Matter Matching Activity" asking students to match different objects (solids, liquids, and gases) to a molecular image. Teacher will model completing the worksheet by using cold and warm calling to solicit student responses to the following questions: » What state of matter do we see in this picture? » How can we tell it's that state of matter? (e.g., "It's liquid because it would change shapes in a different container.") » Which molecular image also shows a liquid? » How can you tell? (e.g., "because that image shows the molecules are constantly in contact with each other, which is how molecules in liquids behave") » How does the behavior of the molecules connect to the state of matter? (e.g., "because molecules in a liquid have the energy to keep moving, liquid is able to change its shape") Teacher uses student responses to these questions (and, as necessary, narrates their own thinking out loud) to fill out the worksheet. **Pair Work:** Students work in pairs on the remainder of the "State of Matter Matching Activity." Teacher checks in on each pair, asking "Why did you choose this answer?" whether answers are correct or incorrect. Teacher clarifies misconceptions as needed. As feasible, pair entering and emerging English Learners (EL) according to shared language.	**Differentiation:** Students who finish working through the next 3 examples before the rest of the class are asked to complete an additional 2 examples.	**Effective checks for understanding** **Differentiation**
10 min	**Independence Practice ("You do" – practice collaboratively and/or independently)** Students are shown a slide with an independent writing prompt: "Using examples of each, compare each of the three states of matter. Refer to their forms and molecular states." During this time, the teacher checks in with selected students' emotional states using feeling cards.	**Differentiation:** Entering and emerging students are given a table with 3 columns labeled "solid, liquid, and gas." Under the corresponding column, these students must draw or write an example of each state of matter, draw or explain how molecules behave in each state of matter, and explain whether the shape of each object changes. **Scaffolds:** Underneath the prompt, for students' responses, sentence starters are provided.	
10 min	**Closure/Exit ticket** **Independent Practice:** Each student is given an index card, numbered 1 to 3. Teacher shows three slides, each with a different image of atoms and molecules. For each numbered slide students must label on the card whether the image is showing a solid, a liquid, or a gas.	**Scaffolds:** Entering and emerging students are given pre-made slips numbered 1 to 3. Next to each number are the words "solid," "liquid," "gas." These students circle the word that correspond to each image shown on the slides from 1 to 3.	