

Positive Greetings at the Door  
Proactive Classroom Management Procedure  
Clayton R. Cook, PhD  
University of Washington



Some teachers report difficulties getting their class period off to a good start. These teachers often have students who come into the class from less structured or monitored settings talking loudly, misbehaving, and taking too much time to get their materials out and be ready to learn. The troubling part is that many times when the class gets off to a poor start, the rest of the period or day is likely to be more of the same. As a result, teachers are constantly interested and looking for easy strategies they can use to guide and motivate their students to 1) transition quickly, 2) be prepared and ready to learn and 3) behave well by avoiding inappropriate behaviors that detract from learning.

The general climate or atmosphere of a classroom, whether it is positive or negative, can have a tremendous impact on how well teachers begin their class and students behave throughout the period or day. Research and practical experience tells us that students are more engaged and better behaved in classrooms in which there is an upbeat climate and students feel that they have a positive relationship with their teacher. One easy and effective way to address this problem is to greet students at the door in a positive, intentional, and strategic way.

### DESCRIPTION AND FEATURES

The Positive Greetings at the Door (PGD) procedure was developed as an easy and effective method that teachers can implement to get their class period off to a good start by minimizing problem behavior and improving students' readiness to learn. The main features of the PGD procedure are (1) positive verbal or non-verbal interactions with students as they enter the classroom to establish a positive climate and provide behavior specific praise, (2) pre-corrective statements to prevent student misbehavior, and (3) prompts delivered to the entire class to attend to the class activity schedule and remind them of the time when learning will begin.

### IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

#### ***STEP 1: Stand at or around the door***

- The goal is to be at or around the door (slightly outside or inside the class).
- This will allow you to monitor students' behavior as they come into your class, as well as carry out the next step in the PGD procedure.
- Remember you are not there to be a hall monitor—your focus is on greeting students coming into your classroom.

#### ***STEP 2: Positively interact with students as they come into the class***

- Positive interactions can consist of verbal (e.g., praising a student for walking in quietly, saying "hello, how's it going") or non-verbal behavior (e.g., patting the student on the back, giving the student a thumbs up).
  - Verbal positive interactions
    - Behavior-specific praise statements
      - "Thanks for walking in quietly, Tom."
    - Salutations
      - Saying "hello, how's it going"
    - Asking the student a relationship-based question

- “Did you win that soccer game?”
  - Non-verbal positive interactions
    - High 5
    - Thumbs up
    - Fist pound
    - Pat on the back
    - Wink
    - Head nod with eye contact
- Your goal will be to initiate at-least **5 positive interactions** with students as they make their way into the classroom. If you can initiate more positive interactions, do so as it will only help at to the positive classroom climate.
- Be sure to scan the room to catch students behaving consistent with your expectations. Often times we don’t need to address the inappropriate behavior of a particular student. Instead, we can praise and recognize another student who is engaging in the appropriate behavior that we want other students to engage in too.

**STEP 3: Provide pre-corrective statements to individual student or entire class**

- Pre-corrective statements are statements delivered to students before you have seen any problem behaviors. These statements are about telling the student(s) about the behaviors they need to exhibit in order to have a good day. Essentially, you are giving them the answer about how to be successful.
- Pre-corrective statements delivered to *individual students* who had a bad day yesterday to remind them of the behavioral expectations (e.g., safe, respectful, and responsible) and give them a few words of encouragement that they can have a good day.
  - **Important:** the intent is not to bring up old business with the student by reminding them of how they had a bad day yesterday. Instead, the purpose is to tell the student that today is new day and that he can have a great day in class by being safe, respectful to others, and responsible by being ready to learn.
    - Although you may want to address incorrect behaviors, it’s important instead to name the behavior you would like to see, rather than focusing on the misbehavior. This contributes to the positive classroom climate. Later, if you see the child engaging in the correct behavior, be sure to give praise to reinforce it.
- Pre-corrective statements to the *entire class* are intended to be the *same as above* but are issued to the entire class. This is if the class had a rough day yesterday or you want to emphasize class-wide behavioral expectations, so that every student knows what you expect of them for the class or day.

**STEP 4: Remind the students to look at the class schedule and of the time when class will begin**

- An aspect of the PGD procedure is to get the class off to a good start and engaged in the learning process as soon as possible
- While students are entering the room, issue a statement to the entire class to look at the class schedule and remind them of when instruction will begin
  - For example, “thank you for coming in quietly and safely, take a look at the class schedule to see what to expect for today. Also, remember that we will start class promptly at 12:45, so please be in your seat and ready to learn.”