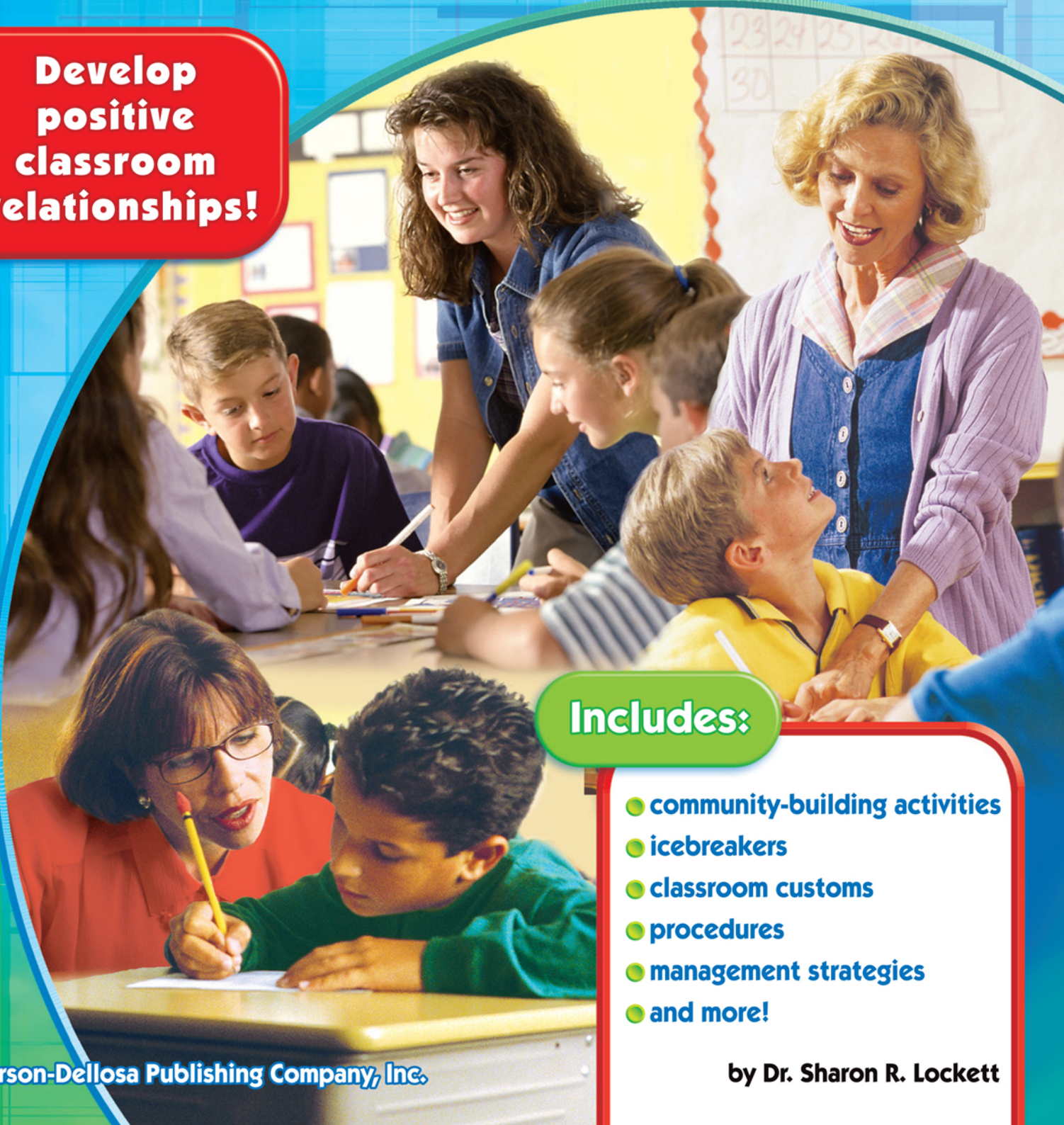


Creative

Classroom Management

A Fresh Approach to Building a Learning Community

**Develop
positive
classroom
relationships!**



Includes:

- community-building activities
- icebreakers
- classroom customs
- procedures
- management strategies
- and more!

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Professional Resources

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INTRODUCTION

Whether in your second month or second decade of teaching, you have likely faced a time when it took all of the energy you could muster to simply walk into the classroom, face those challenging students, and begin to teach. The idea of standing before all of those energetic students who look to you to teach them can be very daunting. It can leave you wondering what to do to inspire future leaders to manage their behavior in a manner that will propel them into purposeful learning.

Accomplishing this goal is not achieved through a curriculum or program. There is no “one-size-fits-all” checklist for creating the perfect classroom. *Creative Classroom Management* does, however, offer a process that will help you develop a positive learning culture in the classroom community. A community classroom includes a well-implemented behavior management program and teaching/learning strategies that are geared toward increasing students’ academic and social strengths. This method has the potential to impact not only their grades, but also their beliefs in their academic and social capabilities.

In this book, you will find a community-building approach, along with guidelines, strategies, applications, and activities to develop a community mind-set in the classroom. Effective and consistent utilization of these relationship-building strategies and discipline methods can help you create the “well-oiled machine” that you’ve always dreamed of. Enjoy the adventure!

Develop a positive learning culture in the classroom community and increase students’ academic and social strengths.

GETTING STARTED

Communicate Your Expectations to Families.

In order for families to trust and support you, they need to get to know you, and you need to get to know them. Make every effort to establish relationships that show families how much you care about their children. It is important for families to know your expectations for student behavior. The sooner you communicate your expectations and begin forming relationships with families, the better.

Get in Touch with Families during the Summer: After you receive the class list for the year, begin planning. Don't wait for the first day of school to start establishing relationships. It's never too early to get off to a good start!

Personal Visits

If possible, a brief visit with each family can give you powerful information that you could never glean any other way. While it does require a sacrifice of your time and energy, it will be beneficial to you as the year progresses. When you tell a family that you would like to meet with them outside of the school and before summer vacation has even ended, you let them know that you really care about them and will take special interest in their child.

Use a city map to assist you in scheduling the visits. Contact each family to establish a good meeting location—a restaurant, a park, or even the family's home—anywhere that is a mutually acceptable location. Try to visit three families each day. If you coordinate your plans to visit families who live in the same area, you will significantly decrease travel time each day. Allot approximately one hour per visit.

Tips for Success:

- 🗣️ Consider taking someone with you (a spouse or a friend) to increase your comfort and success.
- 🗣️ Take a few mementos with you, such as a picture you drew when you were the student's age, one of your own school pictures, something that represents a hobby or your favorite thing to do, or pictures of your family members or pets.
- 🗣️ Give the student a new pencil to save until the first day of school or to use during the summer to remember you.
- 🗣️ Give the family a packet that might contain a class calendar listing school and classroom events, an invitation to visit the classroom, and a school or classroom handbook filled with important information for parents and students to review.

“I Care” Packages

If personal visits are not a realistic option for you, consider creating an “I Care” Package for each student. Write a letter on school stationery in which you introduce yourself to the class and welcome them to the classroom community. Specify some of the fun activities they will complete during the year, some of your favorite things to do, and any other information that you might like to share. Be sure to include a picture of yourself. Send a copy of the letter and picture to each child, along with a small gift, such as a pencil, a coloring book, a pack of crayons, or a small blank book (instructions below). Students will be excited to receive their packages in the mail. This will make a great early connection for you and your students, and you will impress their families with your effort to pay personal attention to their children.

Creating and Using Blank Books: Create a blank book for each student in the class. Each book should be 6–10 pages long. Make templates for each page by typing or neatly writing sentence starters like, “My favorite food is . . . ,” “My favorite thing to do on vacation is . . . ,” or “My favorite thing about school is” at the top of each page. Leave the rest of the page blank so that students can finish the sentences and write about their favorite things or draw illustrations. Copy the templates on colorful paper and assemble them by stapling them along the left edge. The cover of the book should be titled, “(Student’s name)’s Book About Me!”

When you send the blank books to students, include instructions for students to complete their books and bring them to class on the first day of school. This will create an automatic bond of commonality between students, and it’s a great icebreaker!

“Before School Starts” Letter

Early communication with families is critical to classroom community success. Begin with a letter written on school stationery to introduce yourself and express your positive attitude toward building community among students. Send the letter during the summer, just before school starts. This makes a positive impression on families and opens the door for them to support the community-building process. Following is a sample introductory letter (page 10). Use it as a template or alter it to fit your needs. This letter can be used as a part of the “I Care” Packages if you want to include a note directed to the families, as well as the students.

Sample Introductory Letter

Dear Family of _____,

I am thrilled that I will be working with you and _____ this school year. I think of our classroom as not just a classroom but a community that includes students, families, teachers, and administrators. In our community, we learn to care about each other and work together. Our community celebrates every member of the group. We are happy to have you and _____ joining us.

This is my _____ year of teaching, and I find each year to be more exciting. I love watching children learn and prosper in a caring, community-oriented environment. I am committed to keeping in contact with you throughout the year because you are the most important people in your child's life. You are welcome in our community whenever you would like to visit. You do not need to make an appointment.

If I can assist you in any way to make this the best year _____ has ever had, please feel free to call and leave a message for me. I will call you back at my earliest convenience.

Thank you for trusting me with your child. As the leader of our classroom community, I am dedicated to giving _____ the best learning experience possible. You are a very important part of our classroom community, and I look forward to your participation and input.

Sincerely,

“Beginning of the Year” Phone Call

A “Beginning of the Year” Phone Call is another way to establish a relationship with each family. Often, a phone call from a teacher indicates bad news. So, imagine the surprise when a family member receives a positive phone call from you before school starts or during the first week of school! Taking time to make these calls will benefit you as the year progresses in the classroom community.

The purpose of these phone calls is to get acquainted with and introduce yourself to students’ families. Following is a sample phone call script (page 12). Before you call, adapt the script to meet your specific needs. Also, consider sending the “Before School Starts” Letter before you make this call. Include in the letter that you will be calling so that family members will feel more comfortable and prepared to talk to you. If you are not sending a letter home, be sure to explain the concept of a classroom community during the phone conversation. Consider adding some of the information from the Sample Introductory Letter (page 10) when you adjust the phone call script.

During the phone call, document the conversation by taking notes to keep a record of any important information. This will help you remember important issues and impressions that you glean about each child and her family.

Tip for Success: This phone call is *not* the time to bring up concerns about a student. This should be a totally positive, relationship-building activity.

Later in the school year, you may find it necessary to make a phone call to help correct a student’s behavior or work ethic, but you will have increased the possibility of gaining the family’s support if they have already had a positive phone experience with you. This early interaction will be beneficial for you and the students.

Note: If you do not feel comfortable making phone calls, adapt the script to create a “Getting to Know You” Questionnaire to send home to families. Mail the form with the “Before School Starts” Letter or send it home with students on the first day of school.