Classroom Procedures That Lead to Higher Customer Satisfaction

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I. Things to Do Prior to the First Day of School

A. Pay attention to seating charts and room configuration.

1. Decide your chair configuration for that semester.
2. Figure out the best place for your aisles. (Not necessarily a center aisle.)
3. Use seating chart software, or simply make a template for yourself.
4. Try to give 4-5 inches of elbow space between chairs.
5. If you want your class to look orderly, find a way to have straight chairs.
    - Sometimes it takes marks on the floor or tape on the floor.
6. Make a seating chart for every class, including on the FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL.
    - Make an index card for every student with the last name BIG.
    - Set out the cards for the first class.
    - Use the last three minutes of each class to set out the cards for the next class.
    - All of this avoids weird social issues, especially on the first day of school.
    - A seating chart establishes you as the leader of the class.
    - A seating chart sets a wonderful precedent: They don't get to sit where they want.
    - You may want to start alphabetically. You can't be accused of an ulterior motive.

B. Have at least four songs pre-loaded in all choir folders.

1. If you can, have one copy of music for every student.
2. Figure out the most efficient way for students to get music and get seated.

II. Understand a Huge Concept: The First Three Days of School Are a Golden Opportunity

A. Students are "hard wired" to be accepting of routines at the beginning of school.
B. This is the time to set the expectations for:
1. How they greet you on their way into class.
2. What they do when they enter the class.
3. How you are going to be grading them. (More on this later)
4. What your expectations are for posture.
5. What your expectations are for listening.
6. Don't teach everything in one day. Spread the items out over three days.
7. Give expectations in small doses. Watch body language to see if you are losing your audience.

C. Big Concept: Every time you teach something new, you teach the routine.
1. Do an especially thorough job of teaching the routine when it is first taught.
2. Be sure to reinforce after that, especially the second and third days.

III. Understand the Importance of Having Written Lesson Plans

A. A music class has more "parts" to the class than most other classes.

- A beginning activity to focus their attention
- Vocal exercises (perhaps 4-6 different ones in a day)
- Stretches
- Roll.
- Music Theory
- Ear Training
- Music listening
- Solo Tryouts
- Getting-to-know-you activities
- Sight-singing
- Rhythm Work
- Announcements/Fund-Raising
- Woodshedding
- Literature Deep-Dive
- Literature Shallow Dive
- Literature – Mostly for fun (a "dessert" song)
- Time for Affirmation

IV. Focusing on the First Five Minutes of Class

A. Be sure to greet every student at the door warmly every day.
   1. Do it every day.
   2. A fist bump or an "elbow" handshake is fine.
   3. The students may need to be taught how to greet you back warmly.
   4. Some students might be resistant to greeting you back warmly. (Due to their background)
   5. Avoid getting on your computer during this time.

B. Establish your status by "walking your territory" right before the start of class.

C. Train students to be ready to sing within 15 seconds of the bell. Grade on this. (more later)

D. Start your first activity within 15 seconds of the bell ringing (on most days.).
   1. Do this in a relaxed way.

E. If you can, avoid taking roll in the first five minutes.
   1. Perhaps four minutes after class starts, you take roll while the class is doing something silently.
   2. I often had a student take roll while I did, then we compare notes.
   3. If you have a neat, organized seating chart, and neat, organized rows, roll is easier.

V. How to Get the Students to Stop Talking

A. Develop a variety of ways to ask the class to be quiet.
   - Simply asking calmly: "Okay, I'd like everyone to be quiet, please."
   - Playing a calm chord on the piano and training the class to quiet quickly.
   - An echo-clap or a "SH" sound in a rhythm which is echoed by the class.
   - "If you can hear me, clap once."
   - "Shush your neighbor." Train students to calmly shush the person on each time.
   - "Raise your hand if you can hear me."
   - After a boisterous activity, train students to come to order when you play a song.

B. Don't ask for quiet until all are seated.

C. When you do ask for it to be quiet, don't yell. This creates tension in the classroom.
   - If you can, use a microphone and talk calmly.

D. Master the art of "over-practice."
   - "Over-practice is asking to repeat an activity that was done incorrectly.
   - "I'm going to ask everyone to sit down, but if one person talks, we do it again."
   - "I didn't like the way you entered the room. Please try it again and fix certain things."

VI. Using Proximity to Your Advantage

A. Concept: You can conduct the class from any point in the room.

B. Concept: When you get closer to a student, you increase their level of concern.

VII. Know When to Give Students a Little Extra Time to Talk

A. Concept: Healthy communication between students can be a good thing.

B. Sometimes a big event has occurred and the students need a couple of minutes to talk it out.

VIII. Using Grades to Your Advantage

A. Understand a huge concept: Some people don't perform well unless they have <u>selfish motivation</u>.
   1. This is the idea behind speeding tickets.
   2. For many students, grades can be a source of motiviation. (Obviously, not for all students.)
   3. Many things can be graded upon in a choir class:
      - Singing effort
      - Stage presence effort
      - Scores on written tests
      - Concert attendance
      - Scores on oral tests
      - Good posture
      - Good listening
      - Being organized and ready
      - The work ethic of getting to work right away and working with good rigor.
   4. Imagine if you had to recommend a student for an all-state choir who was sub-standard.
   5. Don't be afraid to give "subjective" grades. It happens all the time in the Olympics.
   6. Keep track of grades on a chart each day. (In reality, keep track of the poor grades.)
   7. Usually, I gave two grades every two weeks.
      - Musical Skills: (Singing and Posture) 20 out of 20 possible.
      - Rehearsal Skills: (Listening and Preparedness) 20 out of 20 possible.