

Classroom Management: Case Scenarios

You have volunteered to give a planetarium presentation to 40 middle-schoolers, and have prepared well. As the students are entering, you note that they are especially rambunctious compared to other groups you have had. There are only 4 adults accompanying the students, and 3 of them are undergrads like you. After appropriate introductions and statement of the "rules," you turn down the lights and start your program. Here is what happens:

One of the students has her coat over her head and states emphatically that she is not interested and is going to sleep.

Each time the lights are turned completely off, a couple of the students start throwing pencils and pens into the center platform.

After about 20 minutes, one of the students takes out her camera (it has been completely dark for more than 10 minutes) and a flash bulb goes off. Everyone screams.

There is a student who is sitting to your left who has a number of questions about astronomy, but each time he asks his question, and you try to answer, someone else interrupts.

This afternoon you are giving a planetarium show to pre-schoolers. You've decided on the "navigating the sky" presentation. The students all enter the room, are well behaved, and quietly sit down on the couches. There is about 1 parent per 4 children. You go through introductions and the rules.

After slowly dimming the lights (you are totally involved in your presentation), you "go to dark" and turn off all of the lights. You hear some quiet whimpers and gasps.

You have chosen an entertaining tape that tells the story of the "Seven Sisters and their Husbands." It is 7 minutes long. After 3 minutes, you note that the restlessness of the young audience has reached epic proportions, in spite of the adults' insistence that they sit still and be quiet.

You are half-way through your presentation, everything is going great, when all of a sudden the stars in the north all disappear.

You have the couch lights on low, with the students (we'll say these are 1st - 3rd graders) working in teams to discuss their own constellations and the mythology that goes with them. They are talking fairly loud, but are not misbehaving. However, now you want to get their attention and start talking, asking all to be quiet. You keep asking for silence, but the students are so involved that they pay little or no attention to you. You start to yell! Students just talk louder over you.

You are giving a presentation to some entering freshman (they are still high school seniors, and the month is May). They are very interested in astronomy. One student in particular knows **a whole lot** about astronomy and she makes sure that she hollers out the answers to your questions before everyone else. Even when you ask her to wait until she is called on, the minute someone else hesitates, she fills in. This occurs when the lights are on, and gets worse when the lights are off as you can hardly say, "raise your hand before you speak."

After a presentation has ended and has gone well, the lights are turned up and the students get ready to leave. There are 5 or 6 students who are hovered around you, asking questions and asking for extra handouts to take to their friends. You are so involved in talking with these enthusiastic students that you hardly notice a couple of other students who are tweaking knobs and buttons on the console!

You are in the middle of your presentation, it has been dark for a fairly long time, and you notice that there is some strange light pollution coming through the dome from both the "east" and the "west." It is so distracting that you are having a hard time concentrating on your presentation, and the audience is getting restless. You have about 15 minutes left and don't know whether to stop your presentation, figure out the problem, or go on.

You are in the middle of your presentation, and although the audience isn't out of control, they aren't exactly on task. Some of them aren't listening to what you are saying, many are having their own conversations about what they are seeing. There has been only temporary response to your requests for quiet. Worse yet, the 3 adults who chaperoned the group are not interceding at all; they are all laid back with their star maps, sitting together, and hunting for constellations, seemingly oblivious to what is going on.

A young student has those fabulous shoes that have a light in the heel that goes on when pressure is applied. He is continuously stomping.

A cell phone goes off in the middle of your presentation, and the person is not bothering to answer it.