

Classroom Management and Decorum Panel Discussion

with Kiersten Crawford, Michica Guillory, Marion Napoleon, and Ginger Unger

What decorum issues do you see most frequently in classrooms today and how do you address them?

- We're seeing students unengaged, having side conversations or doing side activities during class, or they're coming to class frustrated and defensive.
- Set expectations at the beginning of class to prevent unwanted behavior, read the classroom rules with enthusiasm to get their attention, and remind them of the rules as needed.
- Give them the "Why?"—what's in it for you to listen and learn.
- Call on people with grace to re-engage them: "You're muted, did you have a question?" & "What do you think, ___?"

How do you encourage participation while preventing discussions from going off-track or one student dominating the discussion?

- Ask "What's on your mind?" before the class, such as in a Form, to get an idea of what people want out of this class. Let them feel heard and know their concerns will be addressed in class or, if more appropriate, address specific concerns after class or later one-on-one.
- Identify the brokers and managing supervisors in class, and redirect questions to them to bring in other participants: "How would you address...?"
- Ask another agent to share or build on the first agent's comment to give others a chance to speak.
- Use polls, games, and zoom breakout rooms to allow a space for sharing experiences, give them the floor for a moment to talk, and then move on.
- Set timelines on topics so agents know we have to move on, and don't be afraid to utilize that "Mute" button! Remind everyone that we need to stay on task to cover all the material and not miss something really important down the line.

What's your approach when a student challenges an instructor's authority?

- How you handle it sets the tone for the rest of class, consider continuing this particular conversation offline in private.
- Defend fellow instructors—what they heard might not have been what was said.
- Don't focus on the instructor, focus on fact-checking. Take the time to google or review source materials to confirm answers to questions.

How do you handle misinformation mentioned during your class?

- Be vulnerable and open, tell students we're all human and thanks for helping us all learn. There's a lot of changes and information out there, and changes might be happening real time so we might not all be currently informed or what was true yesterday is no longer.
- Fact-check! If you are not 100% sure, it never hurts to have documentation or to know how to find accurate and current information.
- To avoid sharing misinformation yourself, prep 2-3 hours per 1 hour CE for every course, every time—knowledge gives you confidence. Reach out to other instructors who may have more expertise in a certain area to find out recent updates or need-to-know information.
- If the misinformation may have come from another instructor, reach out to that instructor with open communication and a focus in helping each other. Share your resources with them.

What strategies work best when emotions run high or conflict arises and how do you recover classroom momentum afterwards?

- Don't jump on one person and make them feel bad. Remind them of classroom rules and that we all agreed to agree or disagree and be respectful to each other.
- Lighten the mood, stay upbeat, share an experience to bring energy and life back, and use humor, if appropriate, to move on.
- Take an unscheduled break if needed to regroup or go into a breakout room for an activity to change the pace.

What advice would you give newer instructors?

- Understand it takes time to get your footing in instructing. Find a mentor, contact a Senior Instructor for help, and don't be too hard on yourself. It took all of us time to master these issues.
- Depth and knowledge builds confidence. Do your research. Learn, listen, and show up.
- It's okay to not have the answer now. Let them know you'll have to find out and get back to them in a follow-up or, during break, utilize the Legal Hotline to call for an answer to a question and/or to find the source to cite.
- Set clear expectations at the beginning of class. Don't be afraid to reference or include TREC §535.65(a)(3): "A provider may remove a student and not award credit if a student does not participate in class, or disrupts the orderly conduct of a class, after being warned by the provider or the instructor." This is not to threaten a student but to protect everyone in the classroom.

What can we do to promote and improve professionalism in our industry?

- Get involved and be present. Work together as a group, help each other excel in this industry, network with other REALTORS®, find or be a mentor, and utilize others' experiences. We are better together than alone.
- Remind students of the critical value of education: it is the only "must-have" requirement to earn and retain a real estate license. Business cards and yard signs are great, but one can do the job without them. We cannot work without education. Get the message out there.
- Direct agents back to their broker for how they handle a situation. Respect brokers.
- Increase competency for all, learn the law.
- You don't need to wait for permission to be better. Set expectations, rules & regulations, and procedures for yourself and others.

Other tips for improving your instruction?

- Don't use "apples and oranges" anymore. Use real examples but nothing you've ever heard before for values, like \$10 or \$15. Increase clarity on what we're really talking about.
- Consider accessibility in your visual materials, e.g. high color contrast for color-blindness.