Classroom Management Plan

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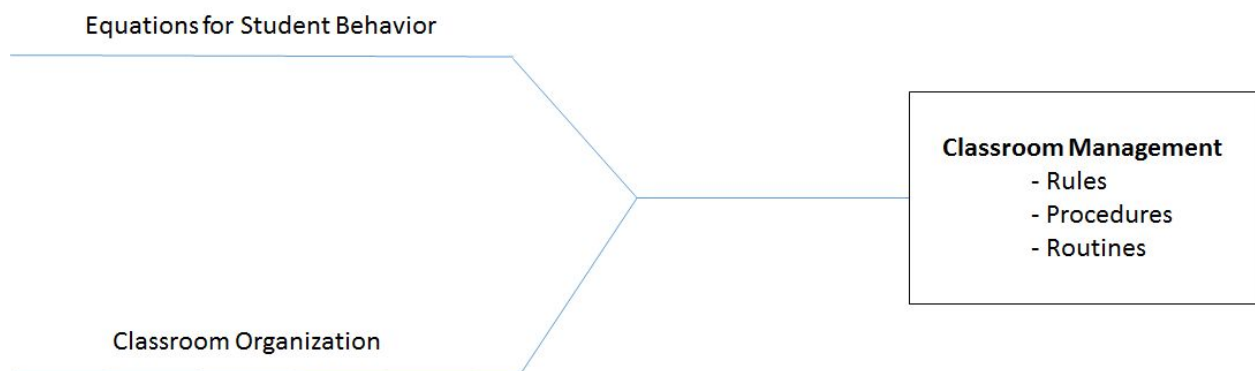
Classroom Management Philosophy and Teaching Style

The guiding philosophy for my classroom management plan is that classrooms are most effective when they nurture and fulfill children's intrinsic desire to learn. Student-centered projects and activities are more consistent with this philosophy than teacher-centered direct instruction. Yet as the present educational infrastructure provides more support for direct instruction than for student-centered instruction, initially my primary teaching style will be direct instruction supplemented with student-centered projects and activities that nurture students intrinsic motivation to learn.

In keeping with my student-centered philosophy of classroom management, I plan to manage my classroom to set the stage for instruction by influencing and directing student behavior rather than controlling it. (McLeod, Fisher and Hoover, 2003). As illustrated in Figure 1, rules, routines and procedures that influence and direct students, the essence of my classroom management approach, follow from expectations and classroom organization. (Stronge, Tucker and Hindman, 2004)

Figure 1. Classroom Management Rules, Routines and Procedures Follow from Expectation for Student Behavior and Classroom Organization (Adapted from Stronge, Tucker and Hindman, 2004)

Expectations for Student Behavior and Achievement

I expect students to act in a manner that contributes to a safe and stimulating environment for learning. Appropriate behaviours include supporting, encouraging and respecting each other - all behaviors required to create a climate conducive to social learning. In such a climate, tactful peer criticism supports, rather than discourages, students. Students then solve both academic and classroom management problems collaboratively. (DeVries & Zan, 1994; Solomon et al., 1992) I expect students, within boundaries imposed by myself and the school administration, to develop and adhere to the rules, routines and procedures that govern their classroom.

In a diverse class with a variety of talents and skill levels, I expect students to set intrinsic achievement goals for themselves within their zone of proximal development. (Darling-Hammond et al., 2003) For example, their goals would not be extrinsic, such as becoming the valedictorian, best singer or math whiz in the class. Rather their goals would be intrinsic, such as improving their singing to better express emotions, or authentic, such as developing the math needed to manage their allowance.

Classroom Organization

When assigned a classroom, I will strategically place furniture, learning centers, and materials to optimize student learning and reduce distractions. Students will sit around tables to facilitate group work. The tables will be set at an angle to the walls and located away from distractions such as doors and sinks. A sink can be both a learning distraction and a genuine hazard if students congregate near it. I will arrange the classroom to minimize congregation in this area.

An angular set of the tables relative to the wall, rather than a perpendicular set, will make it easier for all students to view one end of the room than the other. My desk will be situated at the less easily viewed end of the room to facilitate private sessions with students. An projector mounted on the ceiling will display computer screens on a screen located on the most easily viewed wall of the room.

Bookcases, shelves and cabinets along the walls will provide easy access to books and classroom materials. Moveable bulletin boards and display cases in the center of the room will both display student work and provide more private areas.

Classroom Management

I will employ a variety of actions and strategies to maintain order in my classroom. My primary strategy will be to provide engaging learning opportunities whoever directs the instruction, whether teachers or students. Students and I will jointly develop rules, procedures and routines to influence and direct the behavior of everyone in the classroom, whether students, teachers or visitors, in constructive ways.

Students and I will develop rules governing homework and absences, for instance allowances for late submissions. We will develop rules governing speaking and tardy admittance to maintain an environment in which everyone can be heard with minimal disruptions. We will also develop rules governing what parents may send to school with their children, such as treats and toys.

We will jointly develop and implement procedures for lesson plans and for using resources, including pencil sharpeners and sinks, bathrooms, computers and personal electronic devices. Procedures for lesson plans will include an anticipatory set that may include an ungraded formative assessment, the minimum required direct and guided instruction, and the maximum feasible independent practice. My assessments will focus on progress and effort to encourage slower learners to keep working to attain class standards and faster learners to exceed those standards. Students and I will also develop procedures for requesting support from parents.

We will also develop routines, such as classroom calisthenics to revive drowsy teachers and students as well as meditation to calm all of us down when we are anxious and agitated. Routines for homework will govern when it is assigned and due, such as assigned on Monday and due on Friday, how it is submitted, how to submit it late and how to pick-up materials for missed classes. Students and I will develop routines for reviewing journal entries and other in class work as well.

Rules governing uses of resources, such as sinks and computers, will be posted near the resource. Rules governing conduct, including conversation, tardiness and behavior will be included in a classroom handbook, posted prominently in the main viewing area, on the classroom website, provided to parents for their acknowledgement, discussed during back-to-school night, and posted on the classroom website. Routines for homework and journal entries will be distributed similarly.

I will encourage, not praise, students to foster autonomy, positive self-esteem and acceptance of others. (Hitz and Driscoll, 1989; Brophy 1981) My encouragement will focus on student efforts or specific attributes of the work completed, rather than on completion of the work as praise does. (Dreikurs, 1982) I will avoid praising in the sense described by Hitz and Driscoll (1989):

> Unlike praise, encouragement does not place judgment on student work or give information regarding its value or implications of student status. Statements such as "You draw beautifully, Marc," or "Terrific job, Stephanie," are examples of praise. They are nonspecific, place a judgment on the student, and give some indication of the student's status in the group.

Instead I will offer encouragement that, as described by Hitz and Driscoll (1989):

- Offers specific feedback rather than general comments. For example, instead of saying, "Terrific job," teachers can comment on specific behaviors that they wish to acknowledge.

- Is teacher-initiated and private. Privacy increases the potential for an honest exchange of ideas and an opportunity for the student to talk about his or her work.

- Focuses on improvement and efforts rather than evaluation of a finished product.

- Uses sincere, direct comments delivered with a natural voice.

- Does not set students up for failure. Labels such as "nice" or "terrific" set students up for failure because they cannot always be "nice" or "terrific".

- Helps students develop an appreciation of their behaviors and achievements.

- Avoids competition or comparisons with others.

- Works toward self-satisfaction from a task or product.

When students intentionally misbehave, unless the behavior presents an immediate threat, or is too disruptive, I will generally ignore it and meet privately with the offender privately later during a natural break in instruction to discover why the student misbehaved. If I cannot ignore the student's misbehavior, I will then implement the misbehavior corrective strategies developed with the students early in the year. These may include simply requesting that the misbehavior cease and then immediately walk away or stopping instruction until the misbehavior ceases. What I will not do is magnify the damage to the student caused by their misbehavior by excluding them from future learning opportunities as punishment. Instead I will address the root cause of their behaviour and exclude them from future sessions only after it becomes clear to everyone that the miscreant is neither learning nor allowing others to learn.

Just as I won't punish students with consequences that do not follow naturally from their offense, nor will I provide extrinsic rewards to students, such as stars, that do not follow naturally from their success. A vast literature has shown that such rewards are no more effective than punishment in motivating children to become enthusiastic lifelong learners. (Kohn, 1994).

By offering engaging self-directed instruction and encouragement, rather than arbitrary and capricious rewards and punishments, my classroom management plan will foster in my students "autonomy, positive self-esteem, a willingness to explore, and acceptance of self and others." (Hitz and Driscoll, 1989)

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