Classroom Management Philosophy:

Creating a Community Based, Respectful Environment

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Before I begin to break down my classroom management plan, I feel it is important to point out the philosophy that is going to drive my decisions and actions in the classroom. Students are at the core of my philosophy. As a teacher I believe that my job is first and foremost to help students develop skills that they will use for the rest of their lives. My classroom management plan will revolve around the idea that by creating a collaborative, respectful environment students will have the opportunity to develop the social and academic skills needed to succeed after my class. I will break down my philosophy into four main parts, then provide a breakdown of my plan. First, I believe that every student deserves to have an adult that is willing to give them the benefit of the doubt. It is impossible to know what every student has experienced before coming into my classroom, so it is my job to be understanding while helping students grow as human beings. I also believe that students can grow tremendously by collaborating. This will influence how I set up my room, as well as my daily procedures. The third part of my philosophy is that each and every student deserves to have a safe and healthy learning environment. In order to ensure that this is possible I will have a few rules that will be strictly enforced; while I do not believe that I should have a long list of rules, there will be some rules with clearly defined consequences. The final part of my philosophy that I will be using to outline my classroom management plan is that in order to have optimal learning, parents or guardians must be involved. Because of this belief, I will be keeping parents informed on their student’s progress from day one to day 180. In the end, my goal is to build a strong sense of community in my class with both students and parents so that we can accomplish as much as possible throughout the year.

First I will break down the way that I will show my students that I am willing to be understanding of their individual situations. When students are acting out, whatever the action is, there is often an outside cause. When there is an issue with any of my students I will naturally have to correct the behavior immediately, however I will follow up with the student to get their reasons for behaving the way they did. By allowing the student to explain their reasoning, and listening to everything they have to say, I can then have a conversation with them about what we can do to fix the problem. While it will take time, I believe that this approach will develop trust between the student and I. I will make it clear that for some actions there may be repercussions, but that first and foremost if they are honest with me I will do my best to help them resolve the issue. As students begin to trust me more, and I get to know them better, I will shift this process from being reactive to proactive; rather than waiting for an undesirable behavior to start a conversation, I will look for changes in behavior that I can talk to them about before they act out. Of course it will not always be possible to tell if there is a problem beforehand, however I believe that having trust established will make it far more likely that the student will be open about any problems they are having without acting out. By respecting and understanding students’ situations, I will be able to manage my classroom by preventing situations where students might act out.

While I will approach a vast majority of situations in the way I just described, I will have a one simple rule that I feel is necessary for managing the classroom. This rule will be that all students will use respectful language in the classroom. Because I will be teaching Secondary History there will be times that the class will have debates about both historical and current issues, which can cause high emotions. It is acceptable to disagree, it is acceptable to have a heated discussion, but it is never acceptable to degrade classmates or the teacher. If students break this rule, I will address it first by removing the student from the situation and allowing them time to calm down. Once the student has calmed down, I will address the issue by talking to the student individually, however unlike other behavioral issues there would be a guaranteed repercussion. If a student is using hurtful language towards others, they will be required to come into my room for a portion of their lunch period to write a reflection on how they could have approached the situation differently. I will go over the reflection with the student then dismiss them for the remainder of the lunch period. This will allow me a lot of flexibility in how I handle the situation. If it is a first offense we can handle the reflection and conversation quickly so the punishment will be minimal. However, if the student consistently breaks this rule, it allows me to have a more in-depth intervention to help the student prevent future offenses.

Next, I will describe how I will have my classroom set up and why. Because I will have an emphasis on collaborative work, I would not use the traditional desks facing the front of the room layout. The exact layout of the desks would change depending on class size and space, but ideally, I would have the desks in groups of four. Rather than having two desks face the front and two face the back, I would have two desks face the front of the room, then the other two would face each other to form a U. This would allow every student to see the board or projector during direct instruction, and allow the students to collaborate with the group they are in when appropriate. Because of the U shape I will be able to spot things like phone use easier than if the desks were all close together. Although in my school experience most high school classes did not have an assigned seating chart, I would begin the year with one. How long I kept my seating chart would depend on the size of my class. I will change the seating chart every couple of weeks or when we finish a unit. My reasoning is that this will allow students to get to know everyone in the class, and it will allow me to determine if there are any students that don’t work well together. Once everyone in the class has had an opportunity to work with each of their peers I will lift the seating chart for daily class. It is important to note that for graded group projects, I will assign the students’ groups more often than not, and they will be required to sit with their assigned groups on work days. One of the procedures that I would have which relates to the layout of the room would involve large group discussion days, such as class debates. On days where the whole class is participating in the same conversation or debate, the students will be expected to move the desks into one of two layouts. For a collaborative conversation, the students would move the desks into a large semi-circle with the open end in the front of the room. For a class debate, the students would move the desks to opposite sides of the room so that the two “teams” would face each other. At the end of the last class of the day, the students would be responsible for returning the desks to their usual places.

In order to effectively run my classroom, especially with my focus on collaboration, it will be necessary to have clearly defined procedures. To start class, I will have an opening question on the board that will serve as a way for students to focus in on what we are doing for the day. After the students answer the question, they will make one pile of responses per group of desks so that I can easily pick them up one minute after the bell rings. The bell-work will be worth two out of the five daily participation points, and will not be accepted if the student is tardy. This will help students to focus, as well as encourage them to arrive to class on time. If there is homework due, students will stack their homework next to their bell-work responses. If homework is turned in after this time it will be considered late, unless the student has an excused tardy or excused absence. After the students have completed the bell-work and turned in homework and they are waiting for class to start, they will be expected to check the board for the itinerary for the day. By the time I am finished collecting the students’ work they should have their materials out and ready for the day. If I am giving direct instruction students are expected to take notes silently, when students are working together I will have signs that will indicate the appropriateness of the noise level in the room. This would provide me with a way to manage the noise and energy level in the class without having to constantly tell students to quiet down. When we start the activity, I will have the “Good” card on the board, and if the students were starting to get too loud they would be able to see me walk to the board and switch to the “Caution” card. Finally, if the students were too loud or getting off task I would switch the card to “Stop” so that students could be silent for a moment and refocus on the activity. At the end of class, students will be given 3-5 minutes to write a journal entry reflecting on what we talked about that day. If students finish early they may start their homework or sit quietly until the bell. Journals will be turned in weekly and will be worth three points per entry. These are just a few of the daily procedures I will utilize in my class, however I feel that these are the most important as they establish and maintain an effective learning environment.

Finally, I will have to enlist the help and support of parents in order to be successful in the classroom. My plan is to keep parents informed of what we are learning throughout the year, as well as giving them frequent updates on their student. I will take twenty minutes a day to email parents about something positive their student is doing in class. This means that if I have 100 students and email five parents a day, every parent will get a positive email at least once every few weeks. This will make it so that when I do have to contact parents about a behavioral or academic issue, they are more likely to work with me to solve the issue. By telling the parents something positive about their student regularly they will have a better understanding that I have their child’s best interest in mind. In addition to the emails about the students, I will also send an email to every parent at the beginning of each unit to inform them of what we are learning. I will also include a list of assignments and due dates so that parents can help to monitor their student’s progress. After using these two strategies to connect to parents, when I do meet with them for things such as parent teacher conferences I will be able to reference the emails to show that I was upfront about their child’s progress throughout the term.

By utilizing all of these strategies I believe that I can create an optimal learning environment. I will handle any behavioral issues on an individual basis in order to form relationships built by mutual respect. By having a clear consequence for hurtful behaviors I can create an environment where students know they can participate without being ostracized. When emphasizing collaboration in my classroom, I will be implicitly encouraging students to collaborate outside of class; this is an important skill to have in college as it can make a large impact on student success. In my class there will be a set routine no matter what the activity for the day is so that students know what to expect when they arrive. Also by having the itinerary on the board, students will know exactly what to expect for the week. Although parents may not always be on my side, by keeping them informed I can handle any situation where I meet with them effectively. All in all, I believe that these strategies will help me in building a community within my classroom. The students and parents will be aware that they can come to me with questions or concerns knowing that I will do everything in my power to resolve the issue. I believe that by doing all of these things I will give my students the best opportunity to succeed in my class.

References

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