By creating a teaching philosophy and using a discipline theory that has been researched and observed, teachers are much more prepared to spend time educating their students instead of wasting valuable minutes disciplining students who are not involved in active learning. Authoritative classrooms are run more efficiently than either authoritarian or passive classes because a trusting give-and-take relationship is created between a teacher and her students as they work together to accomplish the objectives and goals of the course.

In creating a classroom environment that will fit my teaching style and actively engage and fulfill the needs of students in my classroom, a combination of several theorists will provide the most suitable discipline plan. Fred Jones has observed a great deal of classroom teachers and students to develop improvements teachers could make to be more effective (Jones and Jones, 1993). Jones developed a concept called “preferred activity time,” (PAT) an incentive plan that acted as a motivational tool for students to behave properly, stay on-task, and complete their work. Implementation of this plan would require that my students participate and complete daily activities and partake in creating an engaging classroom environment. Students could then be rewarded weekly with a short class game or no homework on Fridays and once a month with a movie or game day in which they can bring in snacks. Students will only receive these rewards if all students in the learning community cooperatively meet the class goals. Students must learn to support and help each other or ask questions during class when they are struggling. If a discipline issue occurs, I will talk with the student(s) concerning his/her/their misbehavior and work together to resolve the problem. For the first offense students will receive a warning; the
second offense will result in the loss of the student’s PAT activity for the week; the third offense will result in the loss of the student’s PAT activity for the remainder of the semester.

Teaching high school biology, I will be able to implement enjoyable lessons on a daily basis because science should be hands on and engaging. Lectures will be short and explicit, allowing time for students to work in groups on projects and lab activities. Charles focuses on developing a sense of community within the classroom to enable students to focus on group success from which they will all benefit. Organized chaos will allow students in my classroom to fully connect with other members of their classroom community and enable them to learn and grow together. CM Charles’s synergetic discipline supports my plan because he focuses on reducing classroom misbehavior by promoting students’ desire to learn about classroom topics in interesting and fun-filled ways (Charles, 2005).

By the time students reach high school, they should assume some additional responsibilities in their classrooms. They are old enough to help in the decision-making processes, take responsibility when their behavior is disrespectful or uncalled for, and find ways to improve their behavior when the need to do so is evident. To diminish power struggles between my students and I, CM Charles (2005) suggests that I allow students to be involved in rulemaking, developing consequences and rewards, and creating ways to accomplish classroom goals. By providing guidance for the classroom rules that students will be creating, I will be aiming them towards the central focus of the course- that science can be interesting and fun when directions are followed and everyone participates. According to Glasser, a teacher can improve student satisfaction within the classroom by promoting motivation and learning, allowing students to make more choices pertaining to what they learn in class, and emphasizing quality in all areas of education (Charles, 2005). In the ideal school, students should get to choose what to
learn about, but that is far from occurring because it would be too difficult to accomplish. One way to make this fantasy a reality is to allow my students some freedom in choosing topics to emphasize throughout the course. By discussing topics that students see on TV and other media, such as devastating hurricanes, the birth of an endangered western lowland gorilla, and the possibility of genetic cloning to produce specific body parts, the more interested they will become in those and other related concepts.

To create a quality learning environment, my golden rule would focus on respect towards fellow students and staff members. A few examples of this would be students being quiet listeners, leaving other people’s materials alone, handing in assignments on time, and being careful with lab materials. Voice control is another issue that needs to be addressed in an active science classroom. Students will demonstrate voice control by reflecting the golden rule and not talking during role call or across the room to another person. They will also exhibit this behavior during normal class functions by speaking at a volume in which their neighbors or group members can hear them, but they are not disrupting the entire class. My final rule is something that students should never have a problem with. I simply want them to be their genuine selves, inquire when they are mystified by something, and show me their best effort on a daily basis.

Kagan, Scott, and Kyle concentrate on a three pillar approach to achieving educational goals that involves students, teachers, and parents working together for responsible behavior, teachers and students collaboratively creating discipline solutions, and helping students make responsible choices (Charles, 2005). The implementation of their approach would occur through the development of a contract, with my students at the beginning of the year that states the rules, rewards, and consequences that they have created as a class. A copy of this contract will also be posted on my website for parents to view and sent to the administrators to inform them of the
rules students in my classroom agreed to obey. (An example of a standard student contract has been enclosed.) If students do not abide by the written contract, they will be reprimanded accordingly. The student and I will sit down and discuss why he/she feels unable to fulfill the requirements of the contract and decide if modifications should be made for the student. If further problems arise with a student, his/her parents will be notified and called in for a conference with their child and me.

Sharing my passion and enthusiasm for learning, especially in the sciences, allows me the opportunity to create an environment in which students themselves will be more willing to actively learn and participate. By creating a strong community setting in which I am a facilitator, not a dictator of knowledge, I will gain more respect and trust from my students. Building this relationship will allow my students to develop social skills with their classmates and reduce discipline problems. By providing guidance for assignments and allowing students to problem solve and create their own final product, they will develop a sense of control, thereby reducing power struggles that often occur between students and demanding teachers.

Every student in my classroom will develop a strong sense of community and understand that we, as an entire class, are going to work through problems together. If the community succeeds, students will be joyful and celebrate their accomplishments, but if the community fails in some aspect, they must pick themselves up and work together towards a successful outcome. Every child is capable of learning, but a teacher must take special time and effort to work with struggling students and adjust their way of teaching to meet the needs of those students. As a full-functioning society, there is room for everyone to be successful in some way.
Student Contract for Mrs. Heckaman’s Biology I Class

Dear (student),

As discussed in class on (day of week), we have created a list of student rules and consequences that will be followed for the semester that you will be in my classroom. By placing your initials next to each line, you are agreeing to abide by these rules. If you have questions about these rules please see me for clarification or if you feel personal adjustments should be made (for a logical reason).

Rules:
___1. Respect everyone and their belongings. (This is an easy one.) This also includes turning things in on time and participating in class.
___2. Listen carefully. (Keep your ears open, wouldn’t want you to miss anything important.)
___3. Use voice control (Don’t carry on a conversation with someone across the room; it can wait until class is over. Talk quietly with your neighbor if you have a class related question; don’t interrupt the entire class.)
___4. Be genuine (I want you to be yourself: Tell me if something in class is puzzling you or if you are really interested in something- there may be extra credit involved)
___5. Standard school rules still apply to this classroom along with their punishments.

Consequences: (when rules are broken)
1. Warning and discussion with me as to how we can learn from experience.
2. Detention during study hall, before or after school to spend time thinking about how much easier it would be to simply follow the rules.
3. Meeting with student and parents to discuss why rules are not being followed.
4. Refer student to assistant principal.

Rewards: (when rules are followed)
1(a) “Free” Fridays, no homework for the weekend
1(b) Game/activity for part of the class period, but usual homework assignment.
2. Once a month, free day to watch a movie (science/nature related), play a game, or other agreed upon activity.

I, ______________________________, hereby agree to obey the rules that my classmates and I have created. I will approach Mrs. Heckaman if I have questions pertaining to these rules or any other concerns about the course.

Signed, __________________________                  Date_______________
Work Cited
