A productive, enjoyable, and positive classroom environment in which students behave responsibly and interact positively with others is essential for quality teaching and learning. As a matter of fact, it is every teacher’s dream to obtain this ideal learning environment. While this cookie cutter image of a classroom seems impossible to attain, a well developed and thoughtful classroom discipline plan is just the ticket to achieve a dynamic learning atmosphere. With the help of many professional theorists, I have begun to shape the foundation of various methods I would like to implement in my own class to achieve maximum potential for both learning and teaching.

It has been proven that most misbehavior occurs when students are bored, frustrated, or do not understand classroom expectations. For this reason, it is extremely important for teachers to include their students as much as possible when planning activities or rules. William Glasser refers to this particular teacher as a lead teacher. A lead teacher “realizes that genuine motivation to learn resides within the students, in the form of needs and interests, and must be activated. Toward the end, lead teachers spend most of their time organizing interesting activities and providing assistance to students.” (Charles 81) Including the class in planning activities and formulating rules will give the students a feeling of ownership. If the students have the opportunity to make suggestions regarding activities or lessons, they are immediately going to get excited about the ideas that their classmates helped formulate. In turn, students are going to be more willing to put forth effort towards a lesson they are interested in, rather than an
activity they are simply told to complete. The same theory may be applied to classroom rules. Since the students have to follow the classroom rules throughout the year, I want them to feel as if those regulations are appropriate and reasonable to abide by. I want my students to feel a connection and a sense of responsibility to respect the classroom rules, and I believe that will be most realistic if they are obeying regulations they helped create. For example, on the first day of school you can have your class come up with five rules that will be posted around the room. This will give the class an immediate sense of community and belonging. To complete a full list of classroom policies, I will fill in any gaps as needed to ensure that we cover all areas that may potentially harvest a behavior problem. The class rules and procedures will also provide guidelines for our community to follow in terms of when positive and negative consequences are needed.

Another superior tool to help maintain good discipline is by increasing the level of student responsibility. It is important to begin shaping responsible citizens at a young age. Marvin Marshall addresses this idea with the Raise Responsibility System. Marshall says the program “makes students and teachers aware of their ability to respond to any stimulus, situation, or urge (versus lack of control), and it is reflective (versus impulsive).” (Charles 96) The Raise Responsibility System also emphasizes the value of choice. It is important for children to know how they relate to classroom behavior, and how they may use the concept of guided choices from students that bring misbehavior to an end and replace it with proper behavior. The best way to urge children to develop responsible behavior is to encourage them to accept responsibility for their own behavior. They must understand that responsible behavior benefits the individual and the whole class.
One of the most influential characteristics in active learning that many children lack is internal motivation. As an educator, I believe it is imperative to teach students the importance of pushing and constantly challenging oneself in the midst of an activity, or even a life situation. This will enable children to question, construct ideas, and allow them to be engaged by a multitude of endeavors. Some tactics that assist internal motivation in students is one’s ability to think and speak positively, emphasize the power of choice, think and ask reflective questions, create curiosity, create desire, emphasize a sense of personal responsibility, encourage students, use collaboration, and get yourself excited! A collection of more engaged and inquisitive young minds can be directly linked to a positive classroom environment.

Like in any other successful community, I would like to promote a learning environment that encourages rather than discourages and humiliates. This will help promote a positive self image for many of the children because this theory is intended to empower students at all levels to become more successful. These outcomes will more than likely surface when a class has developed an atmosphere of compassion and determination. It is especially important for children who do not have support at home to have the opportunity to harbor a positive self image. It will make them feel supported, cared for, and more confident of their abilities as a student. “Students know teachers care when they feel teachers are listening to their thoughts and feelings seriously.” (Charles 115)

Dealing with student misbehavior is an extremely important and trying part of teaching. I fully support Richard Curwin and Allen Mendler in their belief that, “teachers should put as much effort into teaching good behavior as they put into teaching bad
behavior.” (Charles 134) Since good behavior is a much more positive topic and will enable students to receive praise, children will more than likely respond better to knowing ways to be recognized for superior conduct. For instance, to help monitor student behavior, each student will have a behavior folder that will contain a calendar for each month. Whether a child does something extraordinarily wonderful, or happens to misbehave, I will record the appropriate action down for that day on the calendar. This will help me continuously monitor their manners, and check for any useful patterns. To keep the parents updated on their child’s behavior, I will send notes home or make phone calls so they are included in the loop. I believe it is important for the parents to receive positive notes, so they know that their child is doing a great job! Too often parents are reminded of their child’s bad behaviors, but those bad comments are not reinforced with positive affirmations.

Instead of focusing on what students should not do, I believe that teachers should model what students should do. In addition, it is very important to always treat students with dignity. This is another way to model how to respect another person, and it enables the teacher to be concerned about a student’s needs and understanding of their viewpoints. “Effective discipline does not attack students’ dignity but instead offers hope.” (Charles 134)

Overall, I believe that classroom management is a continuous task that is ever changing. It is important to stand by one’s personal opinions and techniques when using discipline methods, however, know that with every class various tactics will need to be switched around to meet different students’ needs. With the help of a variety of professional theorists’ ideas, I was able to form a foundation of a general discipline
model. That model will contribute to trying to achieve a classroom’s maximum potential for both learning and teaching. This foundation will allow me to see the importance of being a lead teacher; raise my expectations for student responsibility; encourage student development of internal motivation; promote a positive learning environment; and putting as much effort into teaching good behavior as is often put into teaching bad behavior. With these ideas in mind, I can only hope that I am providing my students with an optimum learning experience.
Resources


Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am very excited about the promising school year we have ahead of us! As many of you know and understand, in order for a classroom to achieve high-quality learning and teaching atmosphere, students and teachers must work together to achieve a positive classroom environment. I believe that it is important for students to have a sense of ownership over the classroom. Therefore, throughout the first week of school I would appreciate the help of your children to help make a list of class rules and guidelines to follow. Based on the rules that the class constructs, I will top off the list with any regulations that will appropriately fill gaps to achieve maximum learning potential. However, I will expect my students to follow some general rules that I believe are significant throughout the development of children.

Those rules are:

- Respect yourself and others.
- Be courteous.
- Maintain a positive attitude.
- Always try for better than your best!
- Actively listen!
To help monitor student behavior, each student will have a behavior folder that will contain a calendar for each month. Whether your child does something extraordinarily wonderful, or happens to misbehave, I will record the appropriate action down for that day on the calendar. As needed I will send notes home, or make phone calls to notify you on how your child is doing in class. Please do not think that you will just be receiving notes or phone calls regarding bad situations. I believe it is extremely important to let you know if your child is doing a great job! At the end of the month, I will send home a copy of your child’s monthly behaviors. This will help me continuously monitor their manners, and check for any useful patterns.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns!

Yours in Learning,

Miss April Zuber