Classroom Management Plan

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Descriptive Statement

This document describes my beliefs and strategies concerning classroom management. It explores my interpretation of various theoretical models and how they can be applied in the development of classroom routines and procedures. The plan also describes explicit implementation strategies. Overall, the classroom management plan reflects the learning environment I hope to create.

Philosophy of Classroom Management

In order to be better equipped for the real world of teaching, my classroom management plan consists of a nice balance between preventive and corrective measures. An ideal world would allow me to both rely solely on techniques for the prevention of misbehavior and generalize about the behavior tendencies of all students based on the observations of just one. This world, however, does not exist. Therefore, a teacher also needs to be prepared to efficiently correct misbehavior. I believe this balance creates a positive and productive learning environment where student progression is the primary focus. With the help of several theorists, I have identified my top ten beliefs with respect to preventive and corrective classroom management.

Top 10 Beliefs of Classroom Management

One

I believe most misbehavior can be prevented through engaging instruction in which the students are active participants. This belief coincides with Fred Jones and his *Say, See, Do Teaching*. Jones believes most teachers wait too long to involve students in the curriculum; the result is a passive environment in which students are disengaged and misbehavior thrives. He feels effective teachers incorporate activities frequently
throughout a lesson. The students are constantly using the information they receive. As a result the class is connected to the material, and misbehavior is an unlikely avenue.

In my experiences as both a student and an observer of math classes, I have noticed that the subject has been largely reduced to the problems in a textbook. Students are not encouraged to explore the mathematics that surrounds them everyday and therefore develop an animosity that only intensifies with more math classes. This contempt can emerge in the form of misbehavior. As a math teacher, I plan to promote activities in which the students discover the value of mathematics beyond the textbook or some worksheets. The school year will start with an inventory in which the students will tell me what they have liked and disliked about their previous math classes. In this way I can plan for active student involvement and deter misbehavior.

Two

I believe misbehavior is easily prevented when teachers confer dignity on students and treat them as social equals. This is compatible with Haim Ginott’s concept of congruent communication. Ginott believed interactions between teachers and students should concern classroom situations and student improvement rather than students’ personality traits. In his model teachers are asking themselves what they can do to help students and focusing on their use of appreciative praise. These effective strategies ensure that students’ dignity remains intact. By modeling self-discipline and putting teachers and students on an equal footing, the teacher in Ginott’s universe is preventing misbehavior.

At the secondary level, some teachers will resort to tactics such as intimidation and fear for use as a control mechanism. I believe that this is only a barrier to healthy
student-teacher relationships, and the end result is either total compliance or resistance. Neither circumstance provides the student with the feeling that he or she has a voice in the classroom. My classroom will be one in which the students know that they have as much input in their education as the teacher. I plan to hold a brief meeting at the end of every week to discuss students’ feelings on the nature and progress of the course. We can talk about anything from their opinions on the usefulness of the homework to the enjoyment (or lack thereof) they derive in daily instruction. Through this practice I hope to let students know that I value their role as decision makers. Rather than impose my will upon passive learners, I will create an atmosphere of equality for both teacher and students.

**Three**

I believe misbehavior is prevented when teachers assist students in fulfilling their primary goal of belonging and contributing to the classroom. Rudolf Dreikurs stressed the importance of this in his notion of a democratic classroom. In this environment teachers give students the respect and attention they desire as well as include them in the process of making decisions. These actions facilitate the achievement of students’ yearning to become a valued member of the classroom. Without a sense of belonging developed in this way, Dreikurs believes students will find other ways to fulfill their goal; these are the mistaken goals of attention-seeking, power seeking, revenge seeking, and inadequacy. These behaviors are a source of disruption to both the democratic classroom Dreikurs endorses and the learning atmosphere all schools strive to create. By allowing students to contribute to the classroom and feel as if they truly belong, teachers are likely to minimize these behaviors, thereby preventing the disruption that follows them.
In mathematics classes at the secondary level, students are often only asked to contribute in ways they may not find fulfilling. In order to meet students’ needs of belonging and contributing to the classroom, I will plan a variety of instructional activities centered on Gardner’s multiple intelligences. This practice will foster a sense of inclusion because it increases the likelihood that no student feels removed from the planning process. Students will also know that they have opportunities to contribute in unique and personal ways. I will also inspire a sense of belonging and contribution by stressing the improvement seen in student work. This can be accomplished through the use of a math portfolio. While I have not yet acquired a sense of the components of the portfolio, I believe that students can use one to see how their understanding of math has evolved and how they contribute to the classroom. Through these strategies I hope to let students know that they belong in my class, a key to misbehavior prevention.

Four

I believe teacher-student relationships are strengthened when the teacher employs noncontrolling methods such as a win-win approach to conflict resolution and active listening. Both preventive and corrective management are addressed by this belief. Thomas Gordon described similar strategies in his influential approach to classroom management. In his no-lose method of conflict resolution, Gordon advises teachers to direct students in a dispute towards a problem solution with which both sides can live. The teacher does not determine a winner; therefore relationships between teacher and student remain healthy and intact. Teachers who do not use Gordon’s style of conflict resolution run the risk of alienating the loser in a dispute. This estrangement may take the form of misbehavior. Active listening is another method teachers can use to solidify
bonds between teacher and students. In this process the teacher lets the student know that his or her message has been heard and understood without judgment. The whole point of Gordon’s model is for students to establish a sense of self-control. Through the application of win-win conflict resolution and active listening, the teacher is using effective questioning and listening strategies to motivate students to solve their own problems. These noncontrolling methods fortify the ties between teacher and students and prevent or correct student misbehavior.

Before entering a teacher education program, I always thought the best discipline approach was one in which someone in administration was taking care of the problem. I did not want to be perceived as an authoritative teacher by my students. I realize now that this mindset is a detriment to the establishment of collaborative and supportive teacher-student relationships. Being a teacher does not mean exercising supreme control over students. In my classroom I will use win-win conflict resolution when there are serious disputes between students. Handled away from fellow classmates, I will act as the mediator and use valuable questioning strategies to lead disputants to a solution in which no one feels like the loser. I am letting the students know that I trust them to arrive at an acceptable solution; this creates a relationship between teacher and students that facilitates efficient corrective management. By using active listening in my everyday interactions with students, I let them know that they are more to me than the grade in my record book. This will also bolster teacher-student relationships in such a way that misbehavior is likely prevented. Whether they are preventing or correcting misbehavior, healthy and happy classroom relationships are invaluable to a teacher.
Five

I believe teachers can use nonverbal communication such as eye contact and physical proximity to correct student misbehavior in a nonthreatening and efficient way. This belief corresponds to ideas from Jones. He does not see much value in verbal reprimands; the teacher just inspires more misbehavior and distraction. By saying nothing and using body language correctly, the teacher lets the student know that his or her behavior is not appropriate without involving the entire class. Jones emphasizes the calming effect of proper breathing, the power of physical closeness, and the leadership and confidence suggested by erect posture. Using nonverbal cues eliminates discipline problems quickly and in such a manner that the student does not feel singled out among his or her classmates.

As both a student and an observer of classes at the secondary level, I have discovered that verbal attempts to correct misbehavior are often met with spoken retaliation or the student’s effort to defend the actions in which he or she was engaged. Either result leads to greater disruptions in which all students in the class are no longer involved with the curriculum. In my future classroom, I will watch for disruptive behavior and use physical proximity to correct it. With this plan I will not bring the entire class into an issue that exists between the teacher and a particular student. The matter will be handled promptly and, to the student’s benefit, in a discreet manner.

Six

I believe optimism and enthusiasm displayed by the teacher act to prevent misbehavior. This belief derives from Marvin Marshall’s concept of positivity. He believes the mindset of positive individuals is contagious; those with whom they interact
tend to adopt similar outlooks. This holds true for communication between teacher and students. If students notice the teacher’s optimism with respect to student performance and enthusiasm for the academic material, they will more likely value being a member of the class. These enriching feelings dispel misbehavior.

While ideas such as raising responsibility and supporting student empowerment remain somewhat abstract, the strength of this belief is related to the explicit methods by which it can be achieved. These tactics are heavily influenced by the teacher. To model a sense of optimism about student achievement and behavior, I plan to incorporate significant amounts of feedback into my future classroom. In upper-level mathematics classes, there seems to be a gross imbalance between the amount of homework given to students and the relevance of any feedback given for that homework. Students are often assigned several problems; the assessment, however, concerns only a few of them or whether the assignment has been completed. I plan to assign only a handful of problems so that I am able to provide more intensive and meaningful feedback. Based on that feedback, students will also be given opportunities to revisit troublesome material. If students feel that I am optimistic about their mastery of the content, they will likely assume similar attitudes about their personal capabilities. To remain enthusiastic about mathematics, I plan to use a variety of instructional methods and student activities. Just as students do not want to endure long-winded lectures each day, I too will benefit from multiple approaches to teaching mathematics. Variety will eliminate the complacency many teachers develop with respect to lecture and note-taking. As a result students will come to class in anticipation of what is to come; they will not have to create their own
entertainment. Both optimism and enthusiasm modeled by the teacher act to prevent misbehavior.

**Seven**

I believe misbehavior is both prevented and corrected more efficiently when teachers anticipate what to expect. Richard Curwin and Allen Mendler provide several suggestions for adequate teacher preparation. Teachers should write down student actions or words they find disruptive and attempt to diagnose the motivations behind such disruptions. In addition to exploring what inspires student misbehavior, the effective teacher also reflects on his or her tactic for solving the problem. Finally, the teacher practices the response strategies prior to their use in the actual classroom environment.

When the teacher has used what he or she believes is the most appropriate and influential approach to actual student misbehavior, the reflective process begins anew. Curwin and Mendler’s discipline plan is proactive. It allows teachers to both prevent misbehavior through anticipation and correct the misbehavior that does occur in a timely and productive manner.

Anticipation and both pre- and post-reflection are vital to a classroom management style that is satisfying for teachers and students. Only a gifted few could survive successfully as reactive teachers. Teachers who anticipate the misbehavior in which students are likely to engage and reflect about ways to handle that misbehavior are better equipped to efficiently correct it. A teacher’s attempts to correct misbehavior cannot be allowed to progress slowly; this enables more students to enter the conflict. As all students become distracted by the teacher’s approach to the situation, the overall
classroom atmosphere becomes more conducive to further misbehavior. Anticipation and the development of a reflective nature reduce the likeliness of such a scenario.

Eight

I believe misbehavior is corrected most efficiently through private communication between teacher and student. This is a tenet of Curwin and Mendler’s discipline with dignity. When teachers must react to student misbehavior, students often resort to a defensive stance. Teachers then follow suit. Curwin and Mendler suggest the human ego is to blame for such inclinations. Students fear losing the respect of their classmates if they meekly comply with the teacher’s public demands. Teachers want to cement their role as the authority figure in the classroom. Conversations in private lessen the impact of the ego factor and contribute to positive and productive dialogues.

As a student at the secondary level, I was easily distracted by confrontations between teachers and students. It often seemed the students became more defiant as the teacher increased his or her coerciveness. In order to avoid such circumstances, I plan to implement this belief and counter misbehavior by suggesting another behavior for the present time and offering to speak privately with disruptive students in the near future. The discreet conversation will address my concerns about the effects of the misbehavior on both the perpetrator and fellow classmates, potential sources of the problem, and strategies for correcting and preventing occurrences of the misbehavior in ways that are useful to both teacher and student. During a private conversation, the teacher is able to descend to the level of the student, and the student can ascend to the level of the teacher. Egos are eliminated, and direct defiance is less likely. Private conversations efficiently correct misbehavior.
Nine

I believe misbehavior is prevented when students realize mistakes signify growth in the learning process. This belief coincides with Linda Albert’s notion of capability achieved through cooperative discipline. Teachers foster students’ sense of personal capableness when they eliminate the fear that typically surrounds mistakes. This fear often discourages students from further participation. They will, however, find other routes to involvement in the classroom; these means are frequently at odds with the procedures developed by the teacher. The effective teacher stresses the connectedness between mistakes and progress. Learning is never entirely refined. Students are less likely to misbehave when they feel capable and successful.

As a continuing student of mathematics, I know mistakes are unavoidable. I still make them consistently. Some students are not capable of handling the mistakes that are sure to come. As a result they may develop a belief that the only way to avoid the mistakes is to avoid the effort. It is the role of the teacher to emphasize progression and not perfection in the process of learning. Progression and mistakes are closely linked; mistakes allow students to redirect their efforts in the pursuit of progression. In my future classroom, I will highlight the importance of mistakes by allowing students to revisit their assessed work in an effort to diagnose and correct misunderstandings. Students will not feel as if the same mistakes are going to haunt them for the remainder of their time with me. They will feel that they can triumph over those mistakes; this sense of capability fosters accomplishment and prevents misbehavior.
I believe classroom environment has a strong influence over student behavior. I want the students to feel comfortable and not regard my room as a temporary prison. Comfort should exist in my room only to the extent that the students feel free to learn and contribute without fear of isolation or ridicule from others. It should not be present to such a degree that the students feel free to act in whatever manner they please. I will establish this classroom environment by showcasing student achievement and the useful applications of the study of math. This will encourage a sense of belonging and genuine student involvement in my classroom. Students who feel as if they belong are less likely to participate in misbehavior.

**Routines and Procedures**

An unprepared teacher and a class of thirty students make for a volatile combination where misbehavior flourishes. Even seemingly mundane tasks require some structure. Routines and procedures can quickly correct and even entirely prevent most behavioral issues.

**Starting the Period**

At the start of the period, the students are to begin warm-up exercises or a writing activity. The exercises or writing prompt will be displayed on the overhead or written on the board prior to the students’ arrival. These exercises should be similar to those students may encounter in assessments. If they have not already started, students are to begin immediately upon hearing the bell. This will allow me to take attendance while the students are experiencing the material. If I allowed uncontrolled conversing, getting the
students’ full attention would likely prove difficult. This procedure creates a productive and efficient opening where both teacher and students accomplish necessary tasks.

**Submitting Homework**

At the start of the school year, each student will be given a folder in which to file homework, tests, or other class documents. The folders will be kept in a crate at some designated location in the classroom. Students are to collect their folders as soon as they enter the classroom and keep them for the remainder of the period. All assignments or in-class assessments are placed in the right pocket; all assessed work will be in the left pocket. At the end of the period, the students should leave their folders on a table near the classroom entrance. The teacher will then assess submitted work and arrange the folders for the next day. This procedure eliminates potential lapses in structure that can occur as the teacher hands back or collects student work. It facilitates the smoothness the teacher desires.

**Getting Students’ Attention**

Despite the transitions a teacher may have developed, there will still be times when it is necessary to regain students’ focus. If the students become too rambunctious, I will simply say, “Focus,” and countdown slowly from three. At the end of the countdown, the students should repeat, “Focus,” back to me so that I know I have their attention. This procedure, a superior alternative to shouting demands or threats, calmly pulls the students back into the lesson or prepares them for potentially important directions. I will also know immediately if I have the students’ attention. Finally, this procedure does not require me to single out specific students who may be misbehaving.
Selecting Cooperative Groups

My means for selecting groups will typically be connected to the mathematical material we are covering. For instance, if I was teaching a unit on conic sections, I would distribute a piece of paper with an equation written on it to each student. That equation would represent a circle, a parabola, a hyperbola, or an ellipse. The students should then find the classmates whose equations represent the same conic section. Many math concepts can be utilized in a similar fashion. Between constructing appropriate equations and ensuring a proper distribution of each type, this procedure will require a significant amount of teacher preparation. However, its value lies in the continual student exposure to the material and the variety of groups it creates. It eliminates the tendency to gravitate towards friends; group work will not entirely become a social gathering.

Communication with Parents

Teacher-parent communication at the secondary level is virtually nonexistent beyond an introductory letter and a quarterly report card. I plan to send home a small progress report every two weeks. The report will be given to the students on a Friday and should be returned the following Tuesday with a parent or guardian’s signature. It should include the student’s assessed level of mastery of course content as well as a genuine complement with respect to the student’s in-class performance. Space should be provided for parent comments or concerns. This procedure extends a feeling of belonging to the parents of students and establishes an efficient line of communication. Students will witness several parties taking an active interest in their lives.
**Pencil Sharpening**

Since I plan to teach math, students will be highly encouraged to use a pencil rather than a pen. Upon entering the classroom, students should immediately determine if their pencil needs sharpened. If that is the case, it should be handled prior to the bell. I will set up electronic pencil sharpeners around the room for instances where several students need to sharpen their pencils before class. A pencil will also be kept in the file folders. Students will also have time for sharpening pencils during independent work time or cooperative group activities. This procedure will eliminate distractions that could occur as students sharpen their pencils during instruction.

**Implementation of Classroom Management Practices**

In order to implement the beginnings of my classroom management system, I will determine the following rules and expectations prior to the start of the school year:

- Respect others and their contributions
- Make a genuine effort on all work
- Demonstrate responsibility

These simple rules establish the sense of a positive classroom environment; it is not a list of things the students cannot do. In the initial days of the school year, these rules will be posted on the board with space left for additional expectations. Students can comment on the teacher-formulated rules and contribute to the list. These contributions will be assessed and voted upon by the teacher and class. By the third day of school, the rules should be established and posted at various spots around the room on visually appealing poster boards. Students will also be exposed to them in a contract they must sign and retain for the school year.
Despite students’ willingness to sign the agreement to follow the classroom rules and expectations, there is no denying the need for enforcement procedures. It seems difficult to implement any sort of card or tally system for students at the secondary level because I will not have my students for the entire day. For students who violate the expectations through a minor infraction, I will simply remind them of the agreed upon guidelines and ask if their behavior complements or deviates from those guidelines. For students who continue to disrupt the flow of instruction or student activity, I will ask them to immediately cease their behavior and offer a private conversation in which the problem can be further discussed. Only in cases of a severe breach of the classroom expectations will I seek help from a higher authority. This approach to enforcement maintains a calming and safe classroom environment while simultaneously strengthening teacher-student relationships and interactions.

While a means of enforcing expectations is necessary, engaging instruction and appealing student activities are valuable tools in the prevention of misbehavior. I can develop these characteristics of an enriching learning environment through many means. First, I plan to appeal to the multiple intelligences conceived by Howard Gardner. Not all students want to learn new material via lecture and note taking; some need to be moving while others benefit from visual encounters. If the students who gain from multiple approaches to instruction know what to expect from a lecture, they will undoubtedly find other means of entertainment. Second, I will attempt to activate students’ prior knowledge or appeal to relevant student experiences throughout my instruction and curriculum. This will increase the chance that students are forming connections with the content and pondering its uses in a more critical manner. Finally, I will incorporate
technology beyond the chalkboard or overhead into my instruction. Most everyone has experienced a form of note taking. Students will attribute more to their school experiences if they feel that it is somewhat unique. These strategies will be used to increase student interest in learning and therefore prevent misbehavior.

My classroom management style will be preventive in its attempts to transition students from names in the record book to contributing members of a democratic classroom. This includes responsibilities for both teacher and students. The teacher should be optimistic about expectations for student achievement and enthusiastic about the material. In order to explicitly develop a sense of optimism, I plan to avoid moment-in-time grading and provide substantial feedback and reworking of student productions. I will retain enthusiasm through varying instructional methods, hands-on student activities, and multiple chances for students to demonstrate what they know. Students should be prepared to contribute in unique and personal ways. Remaining optimistic and enthusiastic while simultaneously planning for student variability will keep the students involved in the instruction and prevent misbehavior.

In addition to preventing misbehavior, I need a classroom management style that supports both those who do not comply with the classroom expectations and those who fulfill them on a regular basis. For those students who violate the guidelines, I need to determine the cause. If the students are not understanding the material and finding other leisure activities, I will search out another approach to instruction that may more readily suit the learning style of that student. I can also ask questions such as, “What is the first thing that comes to mind when you see this problem,” in order to spark a deeper level of thinking. I believe some students are overwhelmed by all the numbers and variables they
encounter in math to the extent that the problem becomes seemingly impossible. If the student has a solid grasp of the material and is misbehaving due to boredom, I will offer opportunities for enrichment in my classroom. Reading in math and real-life applications of the subject are plentiful. I will support those students who consistently demonstrate an understanding of the classroom rules and expectations through positive dialogues and meaningful feedback.

Finally, misbehavior will occur in spite of the precautions taken against it. I need, therefore, a means to correct it in an efficient and productive manner. First, I will use active listening through discreet conversation with those students who continue to violate the established rules and procedures. Students do not like to be reprimanded in front of their peers, and teachers do not enjoy a battle of wills in front of their classes. A private conversation between the teacher and the misbehaving student can go a long way on the road to a quick and significant correction. Second, I will rely heavily on nonverbal cues such as proximity and eye contact. This allows me to quietly correct someone’s misbehavior without distracting other on-task students. The misbehaving student will likely appreciate not being singled out in front of friends and fellow classmates. Finally, I will anticipate misbehavior by attempting to read students’ faces as they come in the door or engage students in a small conversation prior to the bell. If I know what to expect, I can plan a stronger plan for correction.

**Conclusion**

This classroom management plan is the rough foundation for the safe and positive learning environment I hope to establish in my future classroom. I have developed an appropriate blend of preventive and corrective tactics. While total prevention through
engaging learning and student recognition of the classroom expectations is desired, common sense dictates the necessity of correction strategies. It is crucial to remember that this plan is not final; each classroom will bring individuals with unique nuances and personalities. This document can only grow in strength as I gain actual classroom experience.
Dear Parent/Guardian,

I want to welcome you and your son/daughter to another exciting year of math! The purpose of this letter is to acquaint you with the classroom atmosphere I hope to create in conjunction with student input. The following expectations or rules are the foundation for what I believe is a positive and fulfilling classroom environment:

- Respect others and their contributions
- Demonstrate responsibility
- Make a genuine effort on all work
- When in doubt, ask questions

Of course, a foundation is only a beginning; your son/daughter will have the opportunity to assess and amend these guidelines during the first two or three days of the school. Just as I encourage my students to never shy away from asking questions, I extend the same support to you. As a former student with parents of my own, I know that questions will arise. Do not hesitate to call or e-mail me at your convenience.

Despite the expectations I plan to instill in the classroom from the beginning of the year, I am also a realist and I know that misbehavior will occur from time to time. My system of consequences is quite simple. If a student is violating an expectation, I will simply remind him/her of the rules to which he/she agreed. For instances of consistent misbehavior, I will ask the student to immediately stop the improper actions and offer to speak privately with the student in an effort to identify both the cause of such behavior and strategies for correcting it. Finally, behavior that severely violates the expectations will need to be handled by a higher authority. I will make a follow-up phone call to your home. Despite the existence of these consequences, I do not anticipate significant problems with your son/daughter.

This will not be the last time you hear from me this school year. Open communication between teacher and parent can only enrich the school experience of your son/daughter. Every two weeks I will be sending home a mini progress report describing how your son/daughter is progressing with the course content. This will be given to the students on a Friday and needs to be returned with your signature the following Tuesday. There will be a space for your comments or concerns. Again, do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or just want to discuss your concerns. I anticipate an excellent year working with your son/daughter.

Sincerely,

Mr. Pyle