

Classroom Management Plan

Classroom management may be the most important yet most difficult part of teaching. Without good classroom management, even the best developed and delivered lesson plan is likely to fail to be as effective as necessary. The key is how to do this effectively in a classroom environment with such diverse abilities, personalities, and needs.

- **Community**

Probably the most effective way of approaching classroom management is through a community of learners. Through community building, each student knows that they are respected and safe and to return that respect to the teacher and their peers. A classroom that works together will help each other reach their potential while feeling comfortable taking risks and making mistakes to progress in their learning.

There are many ways to approach community building. Activities such as classroom meetings or talking circles allow for any student that wishes to contribute a thought, praise, or concern to do so without fear of being belittled for it. When students become comfortable expressing their feelings, many concerns and problems can be diffused before they become something bigger.

When the students feel comfortable with the teacher and know that their voices are being heard, they are more likely to cooperate and follow the teacher's instructions with respect.

- **Routines and Behavior Criteria**

Routines are important for any person. It is easier to focus on a task when you know what the sequence of activities will be. It also helps students self-regulate during breaks in instruction or at the beginning or end of class. Morning routines appropriate for the grade level could be attendance and circle time for younger grades or journal and check-in for older grades.

During the day, there will need to be clear behavior criteria as well. One important criterion should be how students are to respond to questions (ex. Hands up). Another should outline when they can or can't leave the classroom to go to the bathroom, the library, the office, etc. Typically this will be one or two students at a time with teacher permission and not during instruction. The procedure is for lining up and entering or leaving the classroom for recess, lunch, or when moving to another classroom should also be clear. Tidying their workspace or desk and lining up quietly is a good way for student to show that they are ready to move to the next task or activity. All of the above will help transitions be quicker and more efficient.

In addition to criteria for routines, it is also important to have a set of behavior and problem solving strategies. Some positive behavior supports that

are useful include WITS and school or class created supports that involve respecting oneself, others, and their environment (school).

It is also important to have a clear classroom policy regarding technology, especially if there is not already school-wide policy in place. In general, I am very welcoming to technology as long as it is not used inappropriately (texting, gaming, watching videos) during class time. With privacy laws these days, it is also important that every student knows what is or is not permissible in class. For the most part, taking pictures or video of each other and posting them will not be acceptable. The exception would be for a classroom project that has been approved by the teacher and possibly even parents and administration.

- **Behavior Management Strategies**

Both “good” and “bad” students will misbehave at some point if let to or through peer pressure. The teacher should be aware of the students that tend to cause interruptions or incidents, but should also be aware of any behavior that is out of line with the classroom criteria. Fairness is important as well as quickly noticing and deflecting the behavior toward something more positive. Some often-used strategies include proximity to students that tend to be off task, a gentle warning or suggestion to make a better choice, or a discrete conversation outside the classroom so as not to embarrass the student in front of their peers. When the classroom functions as a good community, they will often police themselves and use their problem solving strategies to help each other stay on task.

- **Final Thoughts**

Any classroom management plan is a constant work in progress. Some things work one year and not the next. There may be some shifts over the years or new research that will affect current classroom management success. I think the most important thing in a class is to be clear with regard to whatever expectations you have and to listen to the students and understand their needs and abilities. We all need to be learners and adaptive teachers to keep up with ever changing classroom conditions and changes in society.