

# Classroom Management Plan

Through the years, my experiences as both a student and a teacher in the classroom have impacted my current beliefs about education and classroom management. For years I have been challenged not only to identify my core beliefs, but to constantly re-examine and revise them as needed. Likewise, I believe a classroom management plan should be constantly re-examined because no two years, and no two classes, will be the same. But even though the details of my classroom management plans may vary, the central core will always be the same because that is what truly reflects my beliefs.

Since I plan to teach in the upper elementary or middle grades, the primary focus of my classroom management plan is responsibility. I believe students should be held responsible for their actions and for their own education. I also believe students need chances in the classroom to be responsible. Students should have the opportunity to be responsible for creating classroom rules, maintaining classroom jobs, and working with their peers towards a common goal. My classroom management plan contains my top ten beliefs about classroom management at this point in my life. Each belief is supported by educational theorists as well as my own personal teaching experiences. Lastly, I have included implementation and engagement ideas as to how the philosophies will be incorporated in my classroom.

My top ten classroom management beliefs are:

|                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Student Responsibility</i>  | <i>Cooperative Learning</i>     |
| <i>Sense of Belonging</i>      | <i>Promote Goal-Setting</i>     |
| <i>Student Ownership</i>       | <i>Energy &amp; Enthusiasm</i>  |
| <i>Relevant Consequences</i>   | <i>Modeling Personal Values</i> |
| <i>Constructivist Teaching</i> | <i>Facilitate Learning</i>      |

## **Student Responsibility**

As I stated above, student responsibility lies at the very core of my beliefs about classroom management. For this belief though, I am primarily focusing on students being responsible for a role in the classroom. When a student feels like an important member of the classroom, he/she will not only be more excited to be at school but be more willing to contribute in the classroom as well. Linda Albert would agree that students must have a sense of purpose and feel as though they are needed in the classroom.

To promote student responsibility, every student in my classroom will have a job. On the first day of school, students will be briefed on the various jobs for which they can apply. Some of these jobs may include classroom librarian, computer helper, taking lunch count, passing out new papers/materials, and returning graded papers. The addition of other jobs will depend on other classroom logistics, but the goal is to have enough jobs for every student in the classroom, even if several students work together on a job, such as passing out papers.

## **Sense of Belonging**

For a student, feelings of being wanted and needed, and feeling as though you belong are two completely different emotions. The need to belong is one of the seven basic needs for every student, as presented by Curwin and Mendler, but many theorists agree that establishing a sense of belonging for students in the classroom is extremely important. Belonging to a group of any kind means being accepted for who you are, a feeling not easily acquired.

In order to establish a sense of belonging, students need to develop a connection to their peers, their classroom, and their teacher. There are many ways to accomplish this task, a majority of which will occur without any additional work. One option is to allow students time for investigating the world around them. Have students research each other in the classroom, even with something as simple as a full class

questionnaire, including the teacher. By finding students with similar interests or similar habits, students will grow more attached to their surroundings. Allowing students to work in groups also establishes a sense of belonging, both to the group and to the classroom as a whole, especially if there is a group presentation involved.

## **Student Ownership**

One of the best ways to encourage student responsibility is to allow students to make some of the important decisions in the classroom, such as rules and consequences. Linda Albert would agree that not only does having a say in the rules makes students feel as though they are needed and valued in the classroom but students will feel a greater sense of ownership and responsibility to their classroom for the year as well. In addition, by allowing students to have a say in the rules at the beginning, any chance for a dispute later about an “unfair rule” will vanish.

The rules for the first day of school will be:

- 1. Raise your hand and wait patiently to be called on to speak.*
- 2. Don't speak when someone else is speaking.*
- 3. Show respect for others and their property.*

Since I am more focused on the upper elementary grade levels in my teaching, I know students will have a great understanding about what is expected and discouraged behavior while at school. We will begin by discussing rules the students found fair and unfair in previous years with previous teachers, and whether or not the unfair rules could be altered in any way to make them more usable. All possible rules will be written on the board and then grouped into similar categories to produce approximately five broad, general rules. This way, students can see that there are many different examples of rule-breaking behaviors. These broad rules will be written on the side of the chalkboard for the remainder of the first week and by the end of the week I will have rewritten them and posted them throughout the classroom. Some possible rules for my classroom may include: “I will be polite and respectful to others,” “I will be

responsible for my actions,” “I will always give my best effort,” and “I will follow all school rules.”

After establishing the rules for our classroom, students will decide as a class what the appropriate consequences should be for breaking each of the rules they have decided are important. Not only does this allow students to understand how rules and consequences go together, but just like the rules previously, it also eliminates future disputes about “unfair consequences.”

## **Relevant Consequences**

Students will be responsible for creating the rules and consequences for their classroom. Through the creation process, the connection that rules and consequences have between them will be discovered. Curwin and Mendler would agree that a consequence is a natural and logical result for breaking a rule. In developing these consequences, students will see how each consequence should reflect the specific misbehavior it follows. Not only that but it should be seen as a way to improve yourself and your attitude.

Some students may be unfamiliar with this concept of discipline so it's extremely important to stress the connection between rules and consequences, especially in the early stages. A consequence is meant to not only stop the misbehavior, but prevent it from reoccurring in the future. I want to have relevant consequences established in my classroom so students understand what will happen and why it will happen. A random punishment in the classroom will do nothing but delay the inevitable repeated offense and that does nothing to better themselves, their classmates, or their classroom.

## **Constructivist Teaching**

In a constructivist classroom, students facilitate their own learning through investigations. Basically, students are responsible for their own learning. In no way does this indicate the teacher is no longer in control of the classroom, but rather takes control by setting up scenarios for students to create knowledge

on their own. Alfie Kohn would agree that allowing students to learn through the discovery process is the best method of teaching.

This is extremely meaningful in mathematics, my primary area of study. When students are allowed to discover processes and theorems on their own they have a much better chance at not only remembering them but understanding them as well. I will incorporate constructivist teaching methods in my classroom as often as possible. Students will first be challenged to think about a problem in a new way, brainstorming creative alternatives to already-known processes. After providing students with a significant amount of time for individual research, students will be allowed to discuss their findings with their peers before presenting new ideas to the class.

## **Cooperative Learning**

Not only should students be held responsible for their own learning achievement, they should be responsible for making sure their classmates have achieved learning as well. Cooperative learning strategies engage students both in their personal learning and their peers' learning. Linda Albert would agree that students are able to learn a great deal from each other when they are allowed to interact in the classroom. This also relates back to a student's need for belonging in the classroom. By allowing students to feel needed in a group, in turn they will feel needed in the classroom.

Cooperative learning can be easily implemented in a classroom by arranging desks in groups and planning lessons which allow students to work in these groups. Lessons can range in difficulty from a classroom worksheet lasting a few minutes during the day, to a collaborative group effort on a project which requires weeks of preparation. By allowing students to work with a variety of individuals, students will be able to creatively challenge each other's thinking and learn from each other's experiences.

## **Promote Goal-Setting**

Setting goals is an important skill for students to practice. In doing so, they begin to recognize exactly what they want and need to achieve as well as understand exactly why they did or did not meet their goal. As important as the goal setting may be, the most important part is the reflection— understanding where they were headed and what happened along the way. Students should be held responsible for their actions and should take responsibility for anything they did that prevented them from going their personal best. Alfie Kohn would agree that as a teacher you should want more from your students than mere compliance. Students should be responsible for their own success and failure. Setting goals and reflecting on them is one way to teach students how actions are related and how to best reach their goals in life.

As a class, we will discuss goals at the beginning of the year. Students will probably need details and examples of quality, appropriate goals. Then, at the beginning of every week, students will decide on a goal for themselves. They will record this goal in a journal they keep at their desk. For students needing work on a particular task or behavior, there may be some teacher intervention when it comes to goal making, but for the most part students will be responsible for their own goals. At the end of the week, students will reflect in their journals how they did at meeting their goal and what they could have done differently. For practice at the beginning of the year, the class will set small goals as groups and reflect upon these goals individually before attempting weekly personal goals.

## **Energy & Enthusiasm**

If students are withdrawn and bored in the classroom, the quickest fix is an enthusiastic teacher. Students feed off energy from their teacher – they thrive off it. C.M. Charles would agree that all it takes in the classroom is a little energy to turn a group of tired, apathetic students into lively bunch of motivated and engaged students. As a teacher, I have no problems breaking out of the lecturing mold and trying new,

stimulating ways to reach my students. Students do not appreciate being “talked at” at any age level and I truly believe if I am excited to teach something to my students, they will be excited to learn it.

One of the easiest ways to infuse energy into the classroom is simply to come to school each day with a positive attitude, excited to share some new things with my students that day. Sometimes it can be hard to be enthusiastic about certain topics, especially if they are not your personal favorite, but if nothing else it's important to not be negative and allow students to develop their own opinions. One of the most important things to remember as a teacher is not to allow one situation, one student, or one day dictate how you treat the next situation, student, or day. Do not dwell on the past. Energize the students and start each day anew.

## **Modeling Personal Values**

Teaching life skills, or personal values, should be a focus in any curriculum, especially elementary school. Many schools, such as my student teaching school, already work these life skills into daily activities, but as a teacher it's important to remember not only to expect these values from students, but to model them for students as well. “Do as I say and not as I do” is no way to run a classroom. Students need role models in their lives and teachers fulfill that position, good and bad. It's up to the teacher to decide whether or not to be a quality role model.

Implementing this belief into the classroom is as simple as doing the right thing and treating people the right way. I will model respect to students by being respectful to them and their needs. I can listen to them when they speak and encourage others to do so. I will model responsibility to students by acting responsibly myself. If I promise to do a certain task at a certain time I must follow through with that and be held accountable for my actions. Breaking promises and breaking trust in the classroom will only result in mixed messages and students who feel as though they do not have to be held accountable either.

## **Facilitate Learning**

When students are responsible for their own learning, the teacher becomes the facilitator instead of the director. William Glasser describes this type of instructor as a “Lead Teacher.” This is similar to the constructivist teaching approach because it provides students an active role in their own learning; however, lead teaching is more than simply setting up an activity or investigation for students to make a discovery on their own. Through lead teaching I will ask students to do useful work, do that work to the best of their ability, and evaluate their work. I will stimulate their thinking and encourage them to do their best, not dictate a lesson and order students around.

By asking students for their input on classroom decisions, this belief will be quickly implemented. Not only can students help decide on classroom rules and consequences, as mentioned above, but students should have a say in their choice of activity as well. As often as possible, students should be provided with a set of appropriate variations to an activity or assignment and allowed to make a choice on their own. Students can also be asked for their input on upcoming lesson topics. I would much rather teach a lesson about something students are interested in and tie it into the material we need to cover than teach a lesson about something I hope students are interested in. As a teacher I will value my students’ input and encourage them to take part in classroom decisions.