

# Classroom Management Plan



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## Introduction

There are many definitions and research in the area of classroom management. It is well established in the literature that classroom management is closely correlated to student educational achievement and teacher burnout (Brouwers et al. 2000, Marzano et al. 2005, Reyes et al. 2012, Skaalvik et al. 2007).

While there are many definitions of classroom management, Brophy 2006 (pg. 17) definition of classroom management: “actions taken to create and maintain a learning environment conducive to successful instruction (arranging the physical environment, establishing rules and procedures, maintaining students’ attention to lessons and engagement in activities)” best aligns with my personal pedagogy beliefs. For me, this definition is empowering because it is my *actions* that can create a productive and safe learning environment. I have the control to create a productive learning environment where students and teacher (myself) thrive.

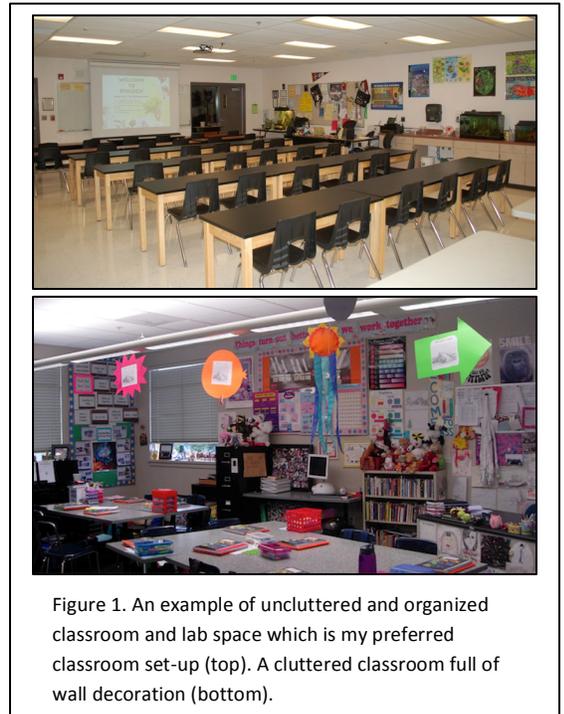
My classroom management plan may a bit naïve as a new teacher but I hope it is a good framework as I begin to teach. I’m prepared for it to evolve as I learn how to be a more effective teacher through future coursework, classroom observation, and actual teaching. My current plan is based off of classes I have taken and observed, along with reading literature on classroom management. My goal of my classroom management plan is to create a positive environment where students feel secure enough to ask questions and be full engaged in science inquire.

## Preparation before the school year starts- Getting off to a good start

Classroom management begins before the students arrive. The arrangement of the desks, wall decorations, and organization of the room will set the tone for the class. I personally find a classroom clear of clutter and wall placards as calmer learning environment (Fig. 1). In addition, neuroscience research has shown that cluttered and busy environments can make it hard to focus and concentrate (McMains et al. 2011). Student’s desk will be facing the front of the classroom with ideally ample space to move freely in a classroom. Marzano et al. 2005 recommends that students should be within three to four steps of where the teacher will spend the majority of the instructional time. When observing classrooms in the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB), classrooms size was often inadequate to accommodate the classroom size and teachers were forced to be creative with desk arrangement.

## Policies/procedures/rules

The first day of school is one of the most important days of school (Marzano et al. 2005). On the first day of school, students need to be made aware of the rules and procedures so they know how to proceed. Rules and procedures for the classroom set the tone of the classroom, such as respecting classmates and can address more specific topics such as seating arrangements and assignments. Rules and procedures can either be established by the teacher or involve the input of the class. By having students have some say in



the classroom rules and procedures it allows them to be active participants in their own learning. As with all rules, the only good ones are the ones that are actively enforced.

Too many rules that are not enforceable and lack reason will be more difficult to enforce. Yet rules can help maintain order and a productive learning environment. Also by having clear procedures of how homework is turned in, grading policy, and what is expected of them; students will spend less time struggling to comprehend what is required of them and have more time to master the subject at hand.

Four rules that will be posted in my classroom are: *Be responsible. Be prepared. Be respectful. Put your best foot forward.* Students need to be responsible for their own behavior, learning, and work especially by the time they are in high school. In my classroom that means they are responsible for coming to class on time, being prepared to learn, and turning in their completed assignments in on time in order to receive full credit. Being prepared means having the materials you need out and ready at the start of class. Complete pre-class assignments such as reading lab handouts before the start of class so we can spend the entire class time working on the lab. Respect in any classroom is important but is essential in a science classroom. Science is about engaging the world around us and exploring the unknown. All questions are valid and need to be respected for great science to happen. Student's space, ideas, and property also need to be respected.

Setting rules and procedures is easier than enforcing them. The first step is to model and follow the rules that you have established. Another very basic way of promoting appropriate student behavior is praise. Positive encouragement works for almost everyone. By simply acknowledging appropriate behavior, it also helps students that act out to get attention by demonstrating that they can get attention when they behave but little when they do not. While you cannot completely ignore inappropriate behavior, you can opt to not fuel the fire by giving the students the attention they want or overreacting. Students with disruptive behavior can be pulled aside so you can talk about their behavior one on one to avoid embarrassing them in front of the class or egging them on.

A lot of enforcing rules and procedures is to find out what motivates students. Some students simply love to learn and strive for good grades which is motivation enough. However others may not care about that but seek attention or peer approval so you must find other ways to motivate these students. Having never taught anything outside of college lab courses, this is one of my biggest fears – maintaining control in the classroom and avoiding chaos.

### **Safety and legal requirements**

Safety can be broken down into two categories: emotional and physical safety.

#### *Emotional Safety*

Everyone needs and wants to feel as everyone is being treated equally. Positive interaction strategies include attributing ideas and comments directly to the student that contributed them, giving them recognition, and encouraging further suggestions. Another strategy is encouraging every student to participate. While some students are eager and quick to participate, some students need more time to think about the question or are shy. Providing extra time after posing a question to let students think about it can help increase participation. Some tips for working with shy kids are quietly asking them when making rounds if they know the answer. Some student are nervous about receiving negative feedback if they are

wrong so asking them a question you are sure they know to help build their confidence. In addition, teachers should avoid telling students they should have known the answer and making subjective comments about wrong answers. They also need to make sure students do not make negative comments. Wrong answers can be learned from and teachers need to encourage participations. To do so, they can validate their participation even if the answer was wrong. Teachers can focus on the correct portion of the answer, state the questions that the wrong answer actually answered, provide hints and clues, allow students to opt of a question they are confused on, and provide the answer with a follow up asking for elaboration from students.

### *Physical Safety*

In all classrooms, physical safety is as important as emotional safety. This ranges from having evacuation plans posted and students know what to do in a fire or other emergencies. In a science classroom, lab safety is extremely critical. Teaching students proper lab safety early will help prevent accidents down the road. Lab safety includes no food or drink in in the lab, wearing appropriate clothing such as closed-toe shoes and long-sleeved shirts, and keeping lab space clear.

### **Student diversity**

Schools are a great place to teach respect of diversity whether it is cultural or individual differences. I support the independence and diversity of different cultures and fear complete isolation or segregation of ethnic groups. As humans, we tend to gravitate to people that are similar to ourselves. I would like to see more culture diversity filter into all schools in Alaska such as opportunities to work with Alaska Native elders or recent immigrants. I think all students would benefit from learning from culturally diverse groups. In addition, learning about different learning disabilities is critical. Everyone has his or her strengths and weakness when it comes to learning. We all need to learn to be better at accepting and respective of our differences.

### **Community resources**

Fairbanks is brimming with community resources when it comes to science. First and foremost we have access to the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the University of Alaska Museum of the North, both with world-renown researchers. Researchers and graduate students could be invited into the classroom to share their research with students through programs such as Changing Alaska Science Education (CASE) program that matches graduate students with K-12 teachers (<http://www.uaf.edu/case/>). Researchers and graduate students can also mentor students on science projects as done often with the Alaska High School Science Symposium (AHSSS) (<http://www.uaf.edu/cnsm/ashsss/>) and Rural Alaska Honors Institute (RAHI) (<http://www.uaf.edu/rahi/>). The University of Alaska Museum of the North (UAMN) offers educational tours for classes and activity boxes that teachers can borrow (<http://www.uaf.edu/museum/education/educators/>).

Another excellent source of biological knowledge and resources is Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). They provide educational kits, classroom activities, and teacher training (<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=education.main>).

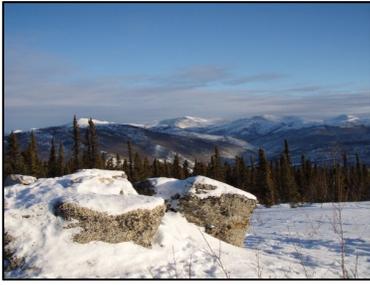


Fig. 3 Boreal forest near Fairbanks, Alaska.

One of the most overlooked yet important community resource in Fairbanks is simply outside (Fig. 2). Explore our naturally occurring boreal forest will make biological lessons more applicable to students and more aware of their surroundings. Often we take for granted a stand of trees or a lake but on closer inspection we begin to see it brimming with life.

### **Planning and conducting instruction**

“Beginning and ending well – and consistently- sets the tone for the classroom and helps students know what to expect.” this quote sums up the importance of the beginning and ending of the instructional period (Marzano et al., 2005, pg 15).

Students need a routine on how to start a class period. One effective way is to have a “sponge activity” as suggested in Marzano et al. 2005. This is a daily activity students can do when they arrive at class but before formal instruction begins. I would use this activity to have students refresh what was learned in the previous class as a review to help bridge into that day’s instruction. Examples of sponge activities include drawing a diagram of the Krebs’ cycle or completing labels on a diagram. By having a daily sponge activity, students know what is expected of them when they arrive at class plus begins them thinking about the subject at hand. This also squeezes extra minutes of learning while housekeeping is being done such as attendance or returning assignments.

Establish an end of the day routine such as homework reminders or a reflection on that day’s topic. These activities can maximize the time students are learning instead of in a learning dead zone.

For common and recurring interruptions such as bathroom breaks, ending an activity and starting another, or fire drills; rule and procedures set in place and practiced can help minimize the disruption to the class. Moving from one activity to another can be indicated by stating that students have two minutes to wrap up or other consistent cues to signal moving to another activity.

During a lecture or presentation, the hardest task is to keep students engaged and on topic. Just as rules and procedures are in place for group work, they need to be in place for teacher-led activities and individual work. To keep students from distracting their neighbors, activities for students to do after they are done with their work should be established. For teacher-led activities, engage the students by keeping it interesting and requesting input from them such as asking direct questions or polling the class.

### **Summary**

Classroom management is one skill that teachers should master in order to create an effective and safe classroom where students and teachers enjoy being in. Classroom management is not set in stone and can be adapted to what works for each teacher, the students, and subject. I have the basic understanding of the importance of starting off on the right foot, establishing procedures and rules that I can also model, create a safe emotional and physical environment for all, celebrate cultural diversity, and develop engaging learning activities. My classroom management plan is a working document that I know will evolve as I begin to teach and interact with students.

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## **Photo credit**

Cover page cartoon by David Sipress

Figure 1.

Cluttered classroom: [www.khanacademy.org](http://www.khanacademy.org)

Organized Classroom: <http://dailyledventures.com/index.php/classrooms-of-the-world-tour>

Figure 2.

Photo taken by Kyndall Powers