Classroom Management Plan for the Secondary Classroom

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Classroom Management Plan

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Introduction

- Strong classroom management plan can help reduce "lost instruction time, feelings of inadequacy, and stress" in the lives of teachers.
- Classroom management should focus less on controlling behavior and more on increasing student learning.
- A social studies classroom management plan encourages both student-teacher and student-student collaboration, promotes student-led learning exercises, and fosters independent growth and autonomous learning skills.
- The best way to help encourage students to follow classroom management plan is by leading by example.

Classroom management may be one of the most important aspect of teaching, and one many teachers struggle with. So much so that in some cases, teachers may leave the education field, a problem that is easily eliminated by learning some simple classroom management skills (Sayeski & Brown, 2011). Strong classroom management skills can help reduce "lost instruction time, feelings of inadequacy, and stress" in the lives of teachers (Saveski & Brown, 2011, p. 8), therefore keeping them in the profession. A good classroom management plan can not only decrease the stress of the teacher, but creates a more stable learning environment in which student learning actually improves. Many teachers see the purpose of classroom management as controlling bad behavior, often ignoring the potential impact classroom management may have on student learning (Eisenman, Edwards & Cushman, 2015). Research has shown that establishing classroom rules and procedures improves both student behavior and learning – great for teachers and great for students!

But there is more to classroom management than rules and procedures. In a social studies classroom, the objective is to achieve civic competence by teaching students to become responsible citizens. Instead of focusing on the traditional behavior and discipline classroom management model, I hope to focus on management plans that encourage both student-teacher and student-student collaboration, promote student-led learning exercises, and foster independent growth and autonomous learning skills. The best way to help encourage students to follow my management plan is by leading them via example in everything from appropriate classroom behavior, to modeling group discussion, and using critical thinking skills. I believe a

strong classroom management plan combined with high teacher involvement, encouragement, and expectations will result in a classroom in which I can remain in control while my students become more independent as they learn to become responsible citizens.

Preparation before School Starts - Discipline Management - Student Behavior

- Classroom atmosphere should create an environment that promotes order, comfort, safety, creativity, and encourages effective learning.
- The physical arrangement of room should be safe for occupants and advantageous to the teacher; limited to classroom size, layout, and available furniture.
- Get to know students as soon as possible.
- Inappropriate behavior can be minimized through encouragement, positive and affirmative interactions and reactions, and leading by example.
- Treat each student equitably, and especially when it comes to discipline.
- It is best to address behavioral issues *before* deploying direct cost strategies.

Before school begins, it is crucial to create an atmosphere in the classroom that promotes comfort, safety, and order, three aspects that are necessary in creating an environment of effective learning (Marzano, et al., 2005). I would include hanging humorous, encouraging, or subject related posters throughout the room, and as the year progresses hanging student work. In addition to creating an atmosphere conducive to learning, it is also important to consider the physical conditions of the room (i.e. furniture arrangement). It is most important that the physical arrangement of the classroom be advantageous to the teacher – easy access to all students, easy access to materials, clear pathways, etc. (Marzano, et al., 2005).

I have found however, that having an ideal classroom layout in my head in impractical simply because you are limited to what is available in the classroom you are assigned therefore you will have to make the

Mentor teacher's classroom layout. Photo by Megan McAfee.

most of the situation you are given regarding classroom design and layout, although I am partial to both rows and small groups.

In addition it is also necessary to learn about your students as much as possible before school starts. I hope to utilize all available resources, talking with other teachers in the building, reading newspaper articles, or even glancing through the previous year's yearbook. I also plan on creating some get to know you activity for the first day of class (a game, a questionnaire, etc.), as well as creating a class syllabus with fundamental policies (i.e. late work) and semester objectives/goals. I want to make a strong first impression, so creating a strong lesson plan not only for the first day of class but the first week of school is important to me.

Student behavior in the classroom can be tied back to the teacher's classroom management plan as well as the teacher's interaction with the students. If a teacher takes interest in their students – aware of interests, individual accomplishments, etc. – students become more comfortable and respectful of their teacher. This can be as easy as listening to conversations, paying attention to clothing, etc. As previously mentioned in the introduction, practicing what I preach, or modeling ideal classroom behavior through example, is another method I can use to encourage good behavior in the classroom. Student confidence can also be maintained though the use of physical gestures and movement, positive interaction strategies, affirmative reactions to incorrect responses, and acknowledgement of good behavior (Marzano, et al., 2005).   I personally like to walk around the room, even while lecturing, not only to observe students but also to make myself available if necessary. A discouraged student may become disengaged and become a discipline issue, so it is important to help prop up all students through encouragement, positive and affirmative interactions and reactions, and leading by example.

It is also necessary to treat each student equitably, and this is especially true when it comes to discipline. This can be difficult, but I always try to acknowledge all inappropriate behavior equally.   Disciplining students differently for the same offense may cause them to resent you. This is why establishing rules and procedures (and the consequences for violations) are clearly established and explained. Common ways of addressing inappropriate behavior in the classroom can vary from verbal, non-verbal, or physical ques, withholding tangible rewards,

or implementing direct cost strategies such as detention or removing students from the classroom. I prefer verbal and non-verbal ques, but I also hope to incorporate physical or auditory ques if possible. I feel it is best to address behavioral issues before having to deploy direct cost strategies simply because they have the potential to negatively affect the student-teacher relationship, and I believe that relationship and rapport between student and teacher is very important. It is also important, when addressing inappropriate behavior, to provide explicit descriptions of the inappropriate behavior or action to the student versus just telling them their action was wrong (Margutti, 2011). Taking the restorative justice approach is also one I believe may be more effective as it can lead to a stronger student-teacher relationship. Restorative justice looks is more emotional and asks the student why in hope of finding, addressing, and healing the underlying cause of the inappropriate behavior (Davis, 2014).

Routines – Policies – Procedures – Rules

- Establishing rules, procedure, and expectations improve both student behavior and learning.
- Student input on rules and procedures is ideal; they take ownership of their actions, become partners with the teacher, and are knowledgeable of consequences.
- Rules and procedures should be established based on subject matter and activities that will be practiced in the classroom (teacher instruction, group projects, presentations, etc.).

Part of effective classroom management that focuses on student learning is establishing a set of rules and procedures as it provides structure and establishes a "safe" zone, both of which are needed by students. Establishing classroom rules and procedures improves both student behavior and learning. Yet the classroom rules and procedures are most effective when they are the result of a collaborative effort between the teacher and the students. When students have input on what rules and procedures they take ownership of their actions and become partners with the teacher by directly contributing to the classroom environment (Frazier & Sterling, 2005). Student involvement in developing protocol for when students break classroom rules and procedures is also encouraged so they are "knowledgeable of the

consequences and understand that they are not arbitrarily prescribed" (Frazier & Sterling, 2005).

When students help contribute to such an integral part of classroom management they feel more invested in the class and their own education, they own the rules they have decided upon, and they feel respect as they teacher has included them in creating rules and procedures instead of telling them the class rules and procedures. Other options that may help reiterate the rules and procedures and reinforce their ownership of them students can physically create the rules or sign a class pledge or individual. Despite their involvement, rules and procedures can easily overwhelm students and should be limited to ten or less for each.

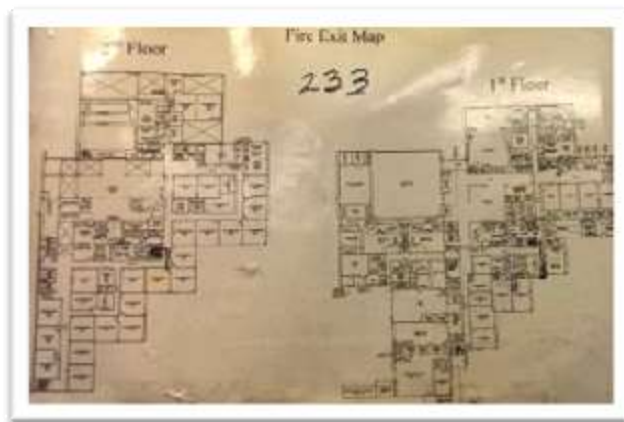As a social studies teacher, rules will have to be established to meet the various activities that will be practiced in the classroom. I hope to have students provide input on classroom rules, procedures, expectations, and consequences. Some of the rules that will be established are appropriate behavior during class discussions, during group work assignments and exercises, during teacher lecture and individual work time, and appropriate use of and procedures for technology. I do believe it is important to have rules and procedures posted in the classroom as well as listed in the syllabus and/or classroom website. In addition to posting a list of rules and a list of procedures, I plan on also posting a list of expectations where items such as come to class prepared, be respectful, be on time would be listed as they are more specifically addressed in the rule and procedures. Hopefully by addressing behavioral issues immediately the first few weeks of class; recognizing and addressing behavior before it escalates; creating a strong relationship with

Mentor teacher's hall pass sign-out station.
Photo by Megan McAfee.

students; being equal; and following through with established consequences can help maintain good behavior in the classroom.

Safety and Legal Requirements

- Student safety should be a top priority of all teachers and administrators.
- Know safety, discipline, and legal requirements for your school and school district before the start of school; ask administrators and/or other teachers for clarification if necessary.
- Be knowledgeable of school and district policies in areas outside of the classroom (e.g. emergency drills, behavior in the halls, at lunch, and school activities, etc.).

Fire escape route posted in classroom. Photo by Megan McAfee.

Safety of students should be a top priority for all teachers and staff at a school. It is important, as a teacher, to read and understand school and district rules, procedures, and consequences. Ideally all behavioral issues in the classroom are addressed and solved within the classroom, although it is necessary to understand when an issue should be turned over to an administrator. In addition to the classroom, teachers need to be aware and manage behavior in the halls, the cafeteria, during assemblies, school functions, emergency drills, and bus/parking lot duty; therefore teachers need to be aware of the rules, expectations, and procedures for these specific circumstances. Other management items to consider as a teacher are school policies on hall passes, emergency drills, emergency situations (lock down, sit tight), and disciplinary procedures (referral forms). These topics should be addressed before students arrive for the school year, during staff meetings and professional development, department head meetings, as well as PLC meetings. (Marzano, et al., 2005) After spending time in numerous classrooms either though subbing or observations I have noticed several teachers

have posters around the classroom that
state procedures for emergency drills and
situations. I hope to incorporate this into my
classroom as it is helpful not only for the
teacher but for students and substitute
teachers as well.

Clipboard with information and resources for substitute and
clipboard for emergency situations and procedures clearly
visible and easily assessable behind teacher's desk. Photo by
Megan McAfee.

Planning and Conducting Instruction – Student Diversity – Engagement – Differentiation

- Plans should engage students' critical and historical thinking skills.
- Assessments should be authentic; differentiates and increases student learning.
- Authentic assessments can lead to more classroom management issues.
- It is necessary to take into consideration student diversity – cultural, personal, and academic.
- Lessons should accommodate needs and considerations of all students.

Planning for social studies should not be taken lightly. I hope to engage my students with material and discussion, and force them to use their critical and historical thinking skills. To accomplish this, a significant amount of research, preparation, and forethought must go into each lesson plan. One of the more effective methods of inducing critical and/or historical thinking is through the use of authentic assessments – research papers, simulations, videos, presentations, group projects – which not only takes more time to plan and prepare, but can also lead to more classroom management issues than a traditional lecture and note style class. To combat any of these behavior issues that may arise, it is necessary when conducting the

lesson to be explicit with the days' objectives and goals, directions, and expectations. It is also necessary to make your presence known in the classroom by walking around the classroom, making eye contact, visiting individual students or groups of students, and continually checking student progress and understanding. Keeping students engaged and on task can help deter any disruptive behavior.

While planning lessons for the classroom, it is necessary to take into consideration student diversity – cultural, personal, and academic. In social studies there are many topics that may be a sensitive topic for some students (slavery, American and Alaskan Native history, politics, etc.) which is why I hope to get to know and be aware of the background of each of my students. Discussing welfare in a government class might offend a student whose family is on welfare, for example. In addition to having an awareness of each student's cultural or personal background, it is equally important to know each student's learning background. While special education (SPED) students have IEP plan (which should be noted and accommodated for per the IEP), many non-SPED students may also struggle in which case you may have to devote more time and effort towards them. For example, increased one-on-one instruction, after school help, or assigning extra tasks for students that finish assignments early.

Cultural and Community Resources and Connections

- Place-based learning increases student engagement and learning in all subjects.
- Incorporating local resources into lessons infuses the school experience with value and meaning for students.
- Alaska is rich with resources teachers can utilize for placed-based learning opportunities.

Utilizing placed-based learning opportunities is a great way to engage students and promote learning in all subjects, and Alaska is a great place for place based learning! Using the local community and environment as an educational tool results in a more community oriented and academically successful student versus teaching through the standard textbook curriculum that results in a disconnect between students and their communities. Placed-based education not only infuses the school experience with value and meaning for students, it also engages

students in their learning experience, helps build social capital by creating students who become active citizens in their community, builds leaders, and develops environmentally conscious students by reconnecting them with their natural surroundings. (Smith and Sobel, 2010). It is only in teaching in tandem with the local environment and community resources on a regular basis that students will be able to link what they are being taught to their everyday lives, helping to strengthen the "social fabric" of their communities (Smith and Sobel, 2010). Utilizing place-based education, students can "connect what they are learning to their own lives, communities, and regions" (Smith, 2002, p. 587).

I hope to incorporate local resources and place-based learning as much as possible when teaching my classes. In Fairbanks, we are lucky to have such an abundant variety of resources to utilize both in and outside of the classroom for placed-based learning. Some of which include the following:

- University of Alaska Museum of the North
- Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center
- Local guest speakers (Native Alaskans, politicians, local residents, etc.)
- Fort Knox Gold Mine

Summary

Student safety – emotionally and physically – should be the priority of any teacher, and I hope my classroom management plan promotes safety as well as student growth and learning. This begins with setting up the classroom and establishing rules, procedures, and expectation conducive to safety and learning. In addition, and perhaps equally important is investing time getting to know and establishing relationships with my students which can increase comfort and decrease behavioral issues in the classroom, help to encourage and motivate academic progress, and can even be the reason a student stays in school. This classroom management plan has forced me to put together knowledge learned during this class and others, as well as my own experience. I hope to use this, especially my first few years teaching, as a guideline that I always revisit and rework as I gain more experience in the field. One thing I have learned

is that a classroom management plan cannot always be set in stone, at times it must be fluid as students can change from one period to another and as teachers, we must be able to adapt and adjust in order to maintain a safe, productive learning environment for all students.

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