Classroom Management Plan

Gerren D. Simms

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I believe that classroom management is not only one of the most important aspects that creates safe and positive learning environments, but also one of the largest stumbling blocks for new teachers. I plan to combat the lack of experience with plans steeped in research and the experience of mentors and then execute those plans with consistency being of the upmost importance, so that plans and procedures quickly become classroom norms. I base my classroom management plan on the five components contained within Domain 2 of Danielson’s (2007) Framework for Teaching; Creating an environment of respect and rapport, establishing a culture for learning, managing classroom procedures, managing student behavior, and organizing the physical space.

Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport

Creating an environment of respect and rapport is essential to learning and the first step in creating a psychologically safe environment. In Edmonson and Lei’s (2014) publication they define the following; “Psychological safety describes people’s perceptions of the consequences of taking interpersonal risks in a particular context such as a workplace.” Learners need to be able to feel safe enough to take risks and try new things to make connections to new material. Wilberding (2014), while speaking about the conditions needed to conduct Socratic Dialogues, said to deliver a lesson one must first create a psychologically safe environment (p.9). The way I plan to create an environment of respect and rapport is through the use of community building strategies and exercises during the first weeks of school so that I can establish the classroom environment and then focus on consistency.
Some of the core exercises I plan to use to build an environment of respect and rapport are class constitutions and consequence flow charts. The class constitution will be a basic set of expectations of how students will interact with each other and instructors, which the students will help to create. As Cooper (2014) suggested, students are much more likely to follow and respect expectations and curriculum that they have helped influence (p.224). I will have the following questions for students to brainstorm about and then we will, as a class, discuss and vote on what articles we need for our constitution: What is respect? How can we create an atmosphere of respect? What is Mr. Simms’ responsibility to us? What are our rights in the classroom? What are the teachers’ rights? Once a constitution has been drafted we will move on to building a consequence flow chart that clearly outlines what will happen when the constitution is broken.

Establishing a Culture for Learning

Once a psychologically safe environment has been established, the next focus is to establish a culture for learning within that environment. Firstly, I plan to lead by example to share my love of learning for all subjects and my passion to acquire knowledge. I will encourage and expect hard work and best efforts to be made and will have wall space set aside to post any exemplary work. I also plan to design my curriculum and environment to be culturally responsive and differentiated to increase the engagement of all my students. Cooper (2014) says that “almost all scholars are in agreement that students learn best when teachers build upon and try to extend what they already know.” (p.211).

Managing Classroom Procedures

Managing classroom procedures is the next important matter and the key to keeping consistency throughout the psychologically safe learning environment that has been created.
Maria Montessori said that “The greatest sign of success for a teacher is to be able to say, “The children are now working as if I did not exist.”” (Mooney, 2013, p. 35). To achieve the ideal Montessori stated, I believe consistency and having procedures clearly posted on the walls are key. Each of my classes will have the following positions open and the positions will be open at the beginning of each unit of instruction to give opportunities to change or earn different positions: Class ambassador, class diplomat, and two class treasurers. The duties of the ambassador get called into action anytime a visitor to the classroom is present, the ambassador will introduce themselves and tell the visitor what class they are in and then will help them find a seat or any materials so that class is not disturbed by visitors or observers. The class diplomat is given the job of taking attendance sheets to the office after warm-ups and also any other paper commutations between my class and office will be handled by the diplomat. The two treasurers would better be called secretaries, but I doubt male students would seek the job as much if it were titled secretary instead of treasurer… either way, the job is to handle all the paperwork within the classroom, meaning passing out and collecting paperwork within classroom. I also want to incorporate more positions if more jobs are found for managing classroom procedures, I believe students enjoy the responsibility and getting to “be the one” who gets to complete a task. At the end of each unit the positions are re-evaluated and earned based on the amount of hard-work put into the previous unit by the student.

Managing Student Behavior

I hope that most unwanted behavior will have been earlier thwarted by having a psychologically safe environment where learning is the culture and procedures are keeping that environment consistent, but I’m certain problems will still arise. When they do arise I want to
approach them in an authoritative manner, which I describe as warm, but stern. Whatever action has occurred that constitutes “bad-behavior” will hopefully fall into one of the categories that is posted on our consequences flow chart so that it will be easy to say, “This is happening, because you did this, and it is clearly posted that this would happen.” The consequence flow-chart will have smaller infractions at the top (e.g. late work = 5% off per day) and more serious ones at the bottom (e.g. repeated unwanted physical contact = school social worker office visit) with a full spectrum in between (e.g. name calling = apology letter, etc.). But not only do I want to focus on stopping off-task behaviors before they occur, but I also will focus on conflict resolution to help with behaviors and to concrete the established sense of community that I hope to have built. Author Richard Cohen (n.d.) says that school-based peer mediation is arguably one of the most effective ways to deal with conflict between students. In response to Cohen’s statements and works, I plan to work with colleagues to help establish a peer mediation program to resolve conflicts that are disturbing the established environment of respect and rapport.

Organizing Physical Space

I want my physical space to be clean, organized, inviting, but more than anything, I want it to spark curiosity. Mooney’s (2014) comments on Jean Piaget agree, “Like Dewey, Piaget believed that children learn only when their curiosity is not fully satisfied. He thought that children’s curiosity actually drives their learning.” (p.80). The way I plan to achieve creating an environment that sparks curiosity is that I will bring my home-based science experiments to the classroom and have the students help. The first experiment I will move into the classroom is in the field of botany; we, as a class, will hydroponically grow plants and then I can use the scientific data for math problems within the classroom. Other experiments will be moved in or created to continue to spark curiosity and engage more students, especially those who are not
naturally inclined to like mathematics since it will seem less like a traditional math class but more of a science lab where we just happen to do math.

I also plan to have desks arranged in either groups of three or small round tables where groups of three can sit. I plan to have the groups of three situated around the room so that the projector is the focus, but the students can quickly turn towards each other for an activity that I’ll use often to break up lectures called 3x3x3 (Cooper, 2014, p. 298). The final piece of the physical environment I want to mention is that I would like to have a corner of my room designated to be the “wiggles” corner. The “wiggles” corner is a 4’x4’ area with (4) 2’x2’ exercise floor tiles, the purpose of the area is that anyone can come over and get their “wiggles” out on a completely voluntary basis. The reason I want to include this, is that during my time teaching and observing, I’ve noticed some children just need to “run and go crazy” and get some energy out for approximately 30-90 seconds to gain any type of focus. The “wiggles” corner is a safe place to quietly and without disturbing anyone, get some energy worked out so the high-energy student can regain focus.

I believe that, armed with the former tools and research, I will be well prepared to establish a psychologically safe environment where learning is an established part of the culture. I also have the tools and experience to organize the physical space to maintain the environment I’ve setup and to spark curiosity within my students. The main focus once those key aspects are established is to maintain consistency and always focus on improving all aspects of my classroom management plan. After all, as I said before, I plan to lead by example and hope that I can help guide as many students down the path of enlightenment during my time teaching as possible.
References


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