

## My Classroom Management Philosophy

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The topic of classroom management is one of great complexity and as I look forward to managing my own classroom, a few questions come to mind. Firstly, what will my students need from me as a teacher, and what will I need from them in order to be successful? Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, how can I create a classroom environment that meets these needs on an everyday basis? In the following pages, I will establish my own classroom management philosophy by considering these questions, and reflecting on the many classroom management strategies that I have experienced in my own education.

Perhaps the most important consideration for me as I begin writing my classroom management philosophy is meeting the needs of my students. In other words, what do my students need from me as a teacher to benefit from their education as a whole? In my opinion the primary needs of any student are support, guidance, and encouragement. Students must be motivated to learn and given confidence when they are struggling, two parameters that define my role as a teacher. They also need to feel respected, valued, and welcomed in my classroom by both me and their classmates, and they need to be comfortable expressing their opinions without judgment. My students will look to me for structure and organization, preparation for what comes next, and information on the world around them. Meeting these needs requires empathy, well established rules and routines, effective time management, and classroom design that fosters learning, on my part, which is certainly easier said than done.

Much like my students have needs for me, so too do I have needs for them in order to be successful as a teacher. I need support from my students, for example, which may take the form of respect and participation. I need feedback and constructive criticism so that I can improve

myself as a teacher. I also need my students to establish and maintain a positive attitude toward learning, and to be patient with me as I begin my career in education. I need them to play an active role in their learning and to be responsible and accountable for their actions. This means that it is necessary for me to be engaging in my teaching so that my students can feel comfortable sharing their opinions both with me and with one another. It also means that I must make my expectations clear and be firm and consistent with my students while maintaining a relationship of trust. These are all aspects of a well grounded classroom community which I hope to establish throughout my teaching career.

Alongside the needs that I impose on my students and those that they impose on me, I have many wants to incorporate into my classroom management philosophy. I want my classroom to be a safe and positive learning environment, both physically and emotionally, for example, where students are not only free to be themselves but where their diversity is welcomed and celebrated. Furthermore, I want my students to take pride in their education and to be respectful of themselves and of one another. I dream of moving away from the traditional action and consequence classroom management model toward positive discipline and I want to involve my students in decisions affecting them. Finally, I want to gain my students' attention without ever having to raise my voice, and I want my students to be excited about learning.

While identifying my own wants and needs and those of my students is important to establishing my classroom management philosophy, it is equally important for me as a pre-service teacher to explain *how* these needs will be met in my classroom. How will I create a classroom environment that balances the needs of my students with my wants as a teacher, and how can I maintain this balance with an ever-changing audience? In my opinion, the key to any classroom management plan is a well established classroom community. This requires fun and

engaging activities, like icebreakers, which help to establish and maintain a group dynamic from the very first day of classes. It also requires frequent periods of class reflection, such as class meetings, where students are given the opportunity to share their opinions with one another and to implement change. Well established rules and routines will also help to shape a classroom community. Perhaps one of the most effective ways to establish rules and routines that I hope to implement in my own teaching is the making and signing of a classroom contract. This does not mean that I, the teacher, will form a never-ending list of rules to be followed in my classroom and have the students sign off on them, but rather, that I will work together with my students, to establish a set of acceptable behaviors that will help to guide their actions in my classroom and elsewhere. I envision my own classroom contract as being short, sweet, and to the point with a focus on respect and responsibility. In my mind, respect of oneself, of others, and of the school and learning environments are the keys to successful classroom management. Similarly, having students take responsibility for their actions is important to me as a teacher, as I feel that it will foster self-discipline and organization. The important thing is that respect and responsibility are behaviors that I want to see in my classroom, not behaviors that will result in punishment.

While rules and regulations will help to set the tone, a well designed classroom will help define the mood of our learning community. Although it is difficult to say with certainty how I will design my classroom, one thing is for sure, my classroom will promote positive energy and will encourage student engagement and participation. This means students will be grouped together so that nobody will feel left out. I don't have a fixed classroom arrangement in mind, but I hope to incorporate natural and ambient light in my classroom, and the color green which minimize stress. I want my classroom to be a dynamic place, and thus, I want there to be flexibility in its design. So often, students enter pre-designed classrooms with white walls and

fluorescent lights that are unappealing to them, and they are immediately turned off before even having the opportunity to learn. To avoid recreating this environment in my own classroom, I will give my students the opportunity to personalize their space, as appropriate. Personalized space will foster personalized learning, and will promote student engagement in my classroom.

Another important aspect of the classroom community is effective time management, for time on task minimizes disruptive behaviors. In my own classroom, I will strive to meet the differing needs of all my students by providing sponge activities, and using opening and closing activities as needed. Furthermore, I will model effective use of classroom time with the hope that my students will follow suit as they manage their own busy schedules. Finally, I will schedule regular breaks to minimize stress, and will constantly be monitoring the time required for my students to complete a given task so that I can make accommodations when necessary.

One final and very important aspect of a positive classroom community is the effective use of discipline. I have left the topic of discipline to the end to illustrate a very important point. Discipline, in my opinion, should not be the focus of a classroom management philosophy. Yes, it is important to incorporate positive discipline strategies into my teaching, but for me, it is more important to first meet the needs of my students by establishing a classroom community, then deal with any behavioral issues that may arise. While I recognize that a well founded classroom community will not eliminate misbehavior and conflict altogether, I am confident that establishing such an environment will certainly reduce it. When it comes to discipline, I believe that no strategy alone will be successful, but that a combination of positive discipline strategies will be most effective. I am not equipped with a single solution to all problems that arise in the classroom, but I can say with confidence that I will do my very best to consider the underlying causes of misbehavior before trying to correct it. This means that no two situations will be dealt

with in the same way, but that in every situation, I will act in the best interest of the student, to the best of my ability, and will involve my students in decisions affecting them. Finally, I will do my best not to react too quickly to any situation, but to address every situation calmly and after reflection. I do not claim to be perfect when it comes to discipline, and there is certainly much more for me to learn in this area, but one thing is for sure, I do not want to fall into the ways of traditional discipline, where every action has a consequence that seeks to control a given behavior.

In terms of implementing my classroom management philosophy, I am aware of the challenge that is before me and I am confident in my abilities to adapt, with continual reflection, in order to best meet the needs of my students. As I set out in my teaching career, this classroom management philosophy will serve as a foundation. It is not set in stone, and in some aspects, may not be realistic, but it is something that can only be improved with experience.