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Classroom Management Plan: Upper Elementary School/6th Grade

Effective classroom management has six dimensions to it. As a future teacher, it is crucial that I have a deep understanding of all six features of classroom management, so that my classroom can run smoothly and be an effective learning environment. The six features are: psychosocial, procedural, physical, behavioral, instructional, and organizational (Smith, 2004, p. 415, fig. 14.1). When all six dimensions are well designed and in harmony with each other, a classroom will manage itself. In this classroom management plan, I will focus on how these six dimensions can be designed to prevent inappropriate behaviors and create a productive learning environment. Problems will still arise, however, and strategies for dealing with those problems will be discussed as well.

Psychosocial Dimension

The psychosocial dimension of a classroom relates to what Smith (2004) calls the classroom climate (p. 416). Though students and their peers, as well as the teacher, can affect the classroom climate, it is the teacher's job to create and maintain a positive classroom environment. I will strive for my classroom to be a supportive and caring environment for my students, while at the same time being organized and conducive to learning. My plan for producing this type of classroom climate is to take on an authoritative role in my classroom. This is a balance between being too passive and too authoritarian; my students should feel comfortable and cared for, while at the same time knowing what my expectations are and how to meet them. I will also hold high

expectations for my students to respect each other, so that the positive classroom climate is not jeopardized.

Using an authoritative attitude to produce a positive classroom climate should produce cooperation in my students, as opposed to compliance. Active listening will play a huge part in my career as a teacher to instill trust and feelings of safety in my students. I strive to be someone my students can turn to when they need to talk. By being an active listener, my students will know that I care about them and am willing to help them. Not only will I be an active listener for my students, but I will also listen carefully to what their parents have to say. This will ensure the parents that their children have a comfortable environment when they are at school, which I think is very important for parents to know. Students spend the majority of their day in the classroom, so it is crucial that the classroom has a positive and supportive climate, where everyone can feel safe.

Procedural Dimension

Clear classroom procedures are imperative for a smooth-running classroom. When students know exactly what is expected of them in any given situation, confusion and chaos can be avoided. Procedures should be taught at the start of the school year so that they can be learned quickly and followed throughout the entire school year. Examples of where I will expect specific procedures to be followed in my classroom are using communal classroom supplies, leaving the classroom to use the restroom or get a drink, and regaining the students' attention. Anything that is taken out of a communal storage area, like a marker set for example, must be placed back right after it is used. For extended use of a communal item students will have the option of checking the item

out by writing their name and the date on a list. The way I will teach this procedure to my students is by frequently reminding them to place items back after they are through using them, until they have all learned the procedure and reminders are no longer needed.

The procedure for leaving the classroom will be that a pass must be used, and only one student at a time will be allowed to be out of the classroom to use the restroom. This will prevent fooling around in the halls and will promote a quick return to the classroom. To regain my students' attention during an activity, I will turn the lights off. Lights off will mean that everyone stops what they are doing and focuses their eyes and attention on me. We will practice this a few times at the start of the year so that everyone is clear on how to react to the "lights out" procedure.

Physical Dimension

For the physical layout of my classroom, I will have all of the desks facing the front of the classroom so that no student struggles to see the lesson being taught. I think that individual desks grouped in pairs will be an effective way to organize the students' desks, being conducive to individual work without distractions and also having the ability to be utilized for working together in pairs. At the back of the classroom will be a computer station, with two or three computers available for student use when deemed appropriate. Avoiding areas of congestion will be a high priority for my classroom, so that pathways are always clear. This will involve careful placement of amenities such as the pencil sharpener and the class bookshelves. I will be sure to place my desk at the front of the room by the classroom door, so that I am able to monitor any traffic coming in or going out of the classroom, while at the same time being

able to see all of my students while they work at their desks. If there is a student in my class with a disability that requires accommodation, of course I will do everything to accommodate their special needs. Whether that is making wider pathways for a wheelchair, creating more visual aides for a student with hearing impairments, or seating a student closer to the board if they have visual impairments; my classroom will be physically ready for any student.

Behavioral Dimension

The behavioral dimension of classroom management is perhaps one of the most influential dimensions in managing a classroom. This is the dimension in which classroom rules reside. Rules should be clear and concise; a limit of six or seven rules is a good approach to rule making. Rules should be stated in a positive way. For example, “do not be mean to fellow classmates” could be restated as “be respectful,” which is a rule I will definitely have in my classroom. A highly effective strategy for ensuring that students follow the rules is having the students themselves come up with the rules at the start of the school year. I will employ this strategy in my own classroom, as I believe it is very effective, and often students will outline the same types of rules that I would choose anyway. However, when they come up with the rules themselves, more ownership and responsibility is rooted in each student, and thus less rule breaking will result.

In addition to classroom rules, the behavioral dimension of classroom management also deals with ways of increasing desirable behaviors and decreasing undesirable behaviors. To increase desirable behaviors, you can use positive reinforcement or negative reinforcement. Contrary to what its name suggests, negative

reinforcement is actually the removal of a negative consequence as a result of good behavior. Other ways to increase desirable behaviors are through the use of contracts and the premack principle. As a teacher, I think I will only use contracts with students who are repeatedly having a hard time following the rules. The premack principle uses behaviors as forms of reinforcement. For example, in my classroom, I may use the premack principle in the way that students may only feed the class pet if all of their homework has been done on time that week. Assuming that the students like feeding the class pet, this will cause an increase in homework being done on time.

Decreasing undesirable behaviors is done with different strategies. Extinction is an effective tool to use, which is the removal of positive reinforcements. If this doesn't work, consequences can be used. However, consequences must always be natural or logical. The punishment must make sense, immediately follow the undesirable behavior, and must serve to eliminate future occurrences of the behavior. Arbitrary consequences are not effective and only serve to anger or confuse the student. In my classroom, I am going to employ cueing students as a strategy in dealing with misbehaving. For example, if a student will not stop passing notes during class, I will simply stand by that student's desk while I teach the lesson, or give that student a simple touch on the shoulder to stop the behavior. Another way I will manage inappropriate behavior in my classroom is through private discussions with the student. For example, if one particular student is incessantly being disrespectful in class, I will meet privately with that student to discuss what can be done to change that behavior. I may use an "I feel...when..." statement such as "I feel upset when you are disrespectful in class because it hurts your classmates' feelings." This gives ownership and

responsibility of the problem to the student without causing them to feel attacked or defensive. Also, speaking privately with the student has prevented them from being embarrassed in front of the class.

Instructional Dimension

The instructional dimension of my future classroom is the most exciting to plan for, because it relates to the actual teaching that I will be doing. My teaching philosophy, to put it briefly, will rely on a multi-faceted approach. I plan to teach in many different styles and ways so that my students will always be engaged, and all of their different interests will be played upon in my lessons. I want to be a fun teacher who makes seemingly dry material come to life in my classroom. Imagination is such a big part of being a child, and I plan to put my students' imaginations to work on a daily basis. Teaching requires a certain degree of improvisation at times, and so I plan in being very familiar with the lessons I'm teaching so that I will feel comfortable changing my lesson plan at the drop of a hat if I need to.

I will represent new concepts in many ways so that my students have many chances for the information to sink in. I think mixing up the teaching styles will also give my students chances to engage in the lessons in different ways throughout the school year as well. My students will also be able to express their knowledge in different ways, because I plan on giving assignments that vary across the board, from math drills, to entice the impulsive students, to written assignments, in order to give the more reflective students a chance to shine.

Perhaps a student in my class will have a receptive language disorder, making it difficult for them to understand the information I present in my lessons. In order to

accommodate that student's learning needs, I will make sure to present information in a clear way and include helpful visuals in my lessons, such as flow charts. This way the student not only hears about the order of operations, but also can look at a visual that puts the steps in order for them while they work on their math assignment (Turnbull, 2010, ch. 6).

Organizational Dimension

The organization of a classroom is key in its success. This can be seen in all of the dimensions we have talked about so far, from the physical organization of a classroom to the procedural organization. It will also be important to me as a teacher to have my work environment well organized. Being a teacher is many things, and one of those roles is an administrator. My desk will always be kept clutter-free, and I will have a filing system to keep track of assignments. For assignments that need to be graded, I will have a portable filing folder so that even when I bring assignments home to be graded, they stay organized. Another way I will stay organized is by writing the lesson plan for the week on the board. This way, both my students and myself will know what to expect for the week and will be able to keep our priorities organized.

Addressing Challenging Behaviors

Even the most organized plans for classroom management can't prevent some problems from arising in the classroom. As future teachers, we are given many tools to bring with us to our classrooms in order to help with challenging behaviors or teaching snafus. Response to Intervention and Curriculum Based Measurements are both useful systems of dealing with troubles that students may have with learning. Response to Intervention, or RTI, has three tiers, each with increasing degrees of systematic

instruction. This gives students more explicit, intensive, and supportive instruction, which can be very useful to students who do not respond well to typical instruction. Curriculum Based Measurements, or CBM, is a method of monitoring academic progress (Wright, n.d.). CBM is not very time consuming, and can be very helpful in tracking a student's progress in basic skills, like math or spelling.

Positive Behavior Supports and Functional Behavior Assessments can be helpful tools in handling challenging behaviors in the classroom. Positive Behavior Supports, or PBS, is an approach to eliminating challenging behaviors and replacing them with more accepted behaviors (Cohn, 2001). A Functional Behavior Assessment, or FBA, is a part of PBS that can be utilized for persistent problems. It is important that the behavior is being described objectively and that labeling is avoided. For example, a student is not "bad," but perhaps they "have difficulty staying on task." Also, it is important to include parents in behavioral problems, because a parent-teacher team is much stronger than just a teacher in eliminating persistent problem behaviors.

In conclusion, I plan to manage my classroom using the six dimensions of classroom management. I believe that if I am organized and prepared each day that I enter my classroom, and have set up specific expectations and procedures for my students, then half of the battle will be won regarding managing my class. I will be prepared for problems to arise, and even more importantly, I will be prepared to deal with those problems effectively.

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