Classroom Management Plan

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I believe to manage a class the teacher has to maintain his/her cool and not “lose control.” In my first practicum I struggled with this because I found myself not being firm enough so I have since learned that there is a difference between being firm and exploding in rage. I believe children can sense that and if you lose your cool you’ve lost the class. I’m reminded of my grade 9 band teacher, who used to lose his cool. None of the students had any respect for him.

One belief I have is that all students should be treated respectfully and equitably at all times. Part of treating students respectfully is providing an environment where they feel they can safely express their thoughts and opinions without fear of being wrong. I believe if the classroom is an environment where the student feels heard and respected that this will mitigate a lot of management issues. To foster this learning environment taking a keen interest in your students is vital. An effective teacher “[gets] to know all students well.”[[1]](#footnote-1) This all stems from my desire for my classroom to be a caring classroom.

I believe part of being firm yet respectful is what is referred to as constructive assertiveness.[[2]](#footnote-2) Rather than being overly aggressive or too timid, being assertive “…[allows] you to communicate to students that you are serious about teaching and about maintaining a classroom in which everyone’s rights are respected.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Thus what guides me is developing a style where I am assertive and caring so that the students feel safe and secure in the knowledge that their rights are being protected.

During my practicum I was fortunate to be able to witness two experienced supply teachers. I noticed a marked difference between their approach to teaching and my associate teacher’s. One in particular had a very firm voice and laid out clear expectations, yet conveyed love of the students with simple things such as addressing them as “my friends.” I had many conversations about how to manage behaviour with that teacher and I believe that her approach is an effective one. Rather than punish students she uses choice language. For example rather than simply telling a student to sit at the back when they misbehave she would give them a choice: if they wished to stay at the carpet they could if they followed the rule of putting their hand up, or they could go to their desk. I found getting my head around this kind of language a challenge but I believe it will pay off in dividends as it empowers the student by giving them responsibility.

One other thing is that choice language follows the logical consequence model in Shapiro & Skinulis’ *Classrooms that Work*, since “the child has been given a choice [and] a second chance for the child has been built into the consequence.[[4]](#footnote-4) I believe choice language and providing consequences rather than punishments is a more effective mode of teaching. While both approaches may achieve a desired result (the misbehavior stops), providing consequences doesn’t damage the child’s self-esteem, while punishments hurt a child’s self-esteem.[[5]](#footnote-5) During my practicum one child in particular acted out a lot and had a hard home life and low self-esteem. Although his behaviour needs to change in the classroom, I believe consequences and choice language is needed to hopefully repair some of that self-esteem.

One thing I saw during placement that was very effective was clear classroom rules and expectations that were consistently maintained. My associate teacher was very consistent with making sure the rules she established in the first week of school was maintained, so that by the time my second two weeks of practicum came around students knew what was expected of them in terms of behaviour and routine. For example they all knew that after coming in from recess they were to take a book and read silently until the next lesson was ready. The benefit from consistent routine is something I believe in.

Although routine and clear expectations are good, I believe that routines and expectations can and should be explained and presented to the students in a logical way. The rules should not feel arbitrary and the students should have a clear understanding of why these rules are in place. Providing analogies and concrete examples of why certain rules are necessary would be one way of achieveing this goal. Shapiro and Skinulus’ analogy of everyone pushing and shoving to get on the bus because they didn’t agree to line up would be a good analogy for respect, for example.[[6]](#footnote-6)

To establish a safe and respectful teaching environment I will use assertive discipline to “[establish] that [I] will not tolerate anyone preventing [me] from teaching, stopping learning, or doing anything else that is not in the best interest of the class, the individual, or the teacher”[[7]](#footnote-7) and will “instruct students clearly and in specific terms about what behaviours are desired and what behaviours are not tolerated.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

One potentially controversial view I have is that I don’t believe in positive reinforcement beyond verbal acknowledgement. I believe too much positive reinforcement creates extrinsic motivation for good behaviour, which is not lasting. I think the “what’s in it for me” mindset that could potentially come from too much positive reinforcement is accurate.[[9]](#footnote-9) How I wish to promote good behaviour is by having children actively reflect on how good behaviour made them feel. For example if I saw a student helping another student rather than commend the behaviour I would prefer to take the approach of having the student reflect on how helping others made them feel. This would foster intrinsic motivation for good behaviour.

Another thing I think is important is to be very encouraging when a student feels like they are inadequate. I believe every student is capable of getting a decent mark in every subject albeit some will have more difficulty than others. I think a student giving up creates a lot of classroom management problems and if the teacher can encourage the student and show them through tangible means that they are not a failure that this will go a long way in improving classroom behaviour. Part of being encouraging is to point out areas where the students are successful to show them that they are not as bad as they think they may be. I also think it is fundamental that you encourage students to try again when they fail, and to make failure okay. That is not to say they should be satisfied with failure, but simply that failure is a part of life and serves to teach us where we may improve.

Ultimately I believe that every child can be successful in school with the right teaching and the right motivation. Part of building a safe classroom comes with encouraging students, but also by having the students better understand and accept each other. One exercise we did in language was a car wash, where we stood in two lines forming a pathway. Then students would go through the pathway and everyone in the line would pay the student a compliment. When they reached then end of the line they would join up, thus every student gets a compliment from everyone else. I think if you did exercises like this, the pride line, the magic box, and success sharing, amongst others, would go a long way to making students feel safe, secure, and willing to take risks in the classroom.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Why I feel encouragement is essential to teaching is that “[it] evaluates the deed, not the doer.”[[11]](#footnote-11) By encouraging specific deeds and efforts, you are in effect fostering a sense of trust in the students’ own ability to overcome hardships. Encouragement can happen for anything. Whether the child succeeds or fails you can always encourage them to keep at it or that next time will be better. This is also why I feel that when dealing with undesirable classroom behaviour the teacher should focus on the behaviour and not the student by providing logical consequences. Whether the student is doing something desirable or undesirable, I believe that teachers should focus on the act and not the person. No person is inherently good or bad, so teachers should focus on actions.

**Bibliography**

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1. Forrest W. Parkay, Beverly Hardcastle Standford, John P. Vaillancourt, Heather C. Stephens, and James Robert Harris, *Becoming a Teacher*. 4th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2010), 207 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Forrest W. Parkay et al., *Becoming a Teacher*, 217 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Forrest W. Parkay et al., *Becoming a Teacher*, 217 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Stan Shapiro and Karen Skinulus, *Classrooms That Work*, (Toronto: Practical Parenting, 2000), 75 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Stan Shapiro and Kaaren Skinulus, *Classrooms That Work*, 75 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Stan Shapiro and Kaaren Skinulus, *Classrooms That Work*, 91 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Forrest W. Parkay et al., *Becoming a Teacher*, 217 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Forrest W. Parkay et al., *Becoming a Teacher*, 217 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Stan Shapiro and Kaaren Skinulus, *Classrooms That Work*, 65 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Stan Shapiro and Kaaren Skinulus, *Classrooms That Work*, 27-29 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Stan Shapiro and Kaaren Skinulus, *Classrooms That Work*, 29 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)