

Classroom Management Plan

My Educational philosophy

My educational philosophy is to create a positive classroom environment in which each student has the best possibility of learning. This will in the first instance, involve developing a preventive classroom management plan in which the 'learning context[s] out-compete[s] [...] inappropriate behavior' (Arthur, Gordon & Butterfield 2003, p.1). Classroom management is therefore 'proactive' rather than 'reactive' (Arthur, Gordon & Butterfield 2003, p.1). This will be created through engaging lessons informed by constructivism in which students play an active role in their learning and by using a range of humane teaching approaches including group work and cooperative learning. There may however, be times when students display inappropriate behavior. This is when intervention will be called upon. The plan for this will be set out in a democratic environment drawing on aspects of behaviorism, particularly Canter's assertive discipline. An integral part of the classroom culture is the student-teacher relationship. I aim to quickly establish a positive one in which there is mutual respect; both will have a voice but neither will take ownership. A further aspect important to any classroom situation is inclusion and cohesion. This is becoming increasingly significant in the Australian context as an increasing number of refugee children add diversity to the classroom and indigenous students continue to find a voice in mainstream schooling. My aim is to create a classroom culture in which all students feel equal and show mutual respect.

Classroom Culture

I aim to build a classroom culture which is positive, democratic, respectful and inclusive. In order to achieve a positive atmosphere, I will work on building a positive teacher-student relationship as well as a positive student-student one. While I discuss the former below, the latter is discussed under the heading: an inclusive classroom.

Building a positive teacher–student relationship

As Grossman (2004, p. 25) highlights, building a positive teacher–student relationship is an important part of the management process. I will work on this from day one by learning the students' names quickly and addressing them accordingly. This is also a part of my proactive management approach as I have learnt in my ESL classes that once I address the students by their name, they not only engage more with the material, but also behave appropriately. This is because I have shown that I am taking a genuine interest in them; they are no longer just a student but a person with individual needs. Should inappropriate behavior arise however, I am also in a better position to deal with it quickly by knowing the student's name. This positive relationship will be maintained by meeting and greeting the students each day as they enter the classroom.

Expectations

Academic achievement

Students will be told that they are expected to achieve their potential and that this will be possible as long as we work together in providing a positive environment in which learning is possible. This is particularly important for indigenous students who have a record of underachievement and are continuing to find their place in the mainstream classroom.

Behavior

In spite of my proactive approach to classroom management there may be times when students act inappropriately. This is when I will use my intervention based on Canter's assertive discipline. Because assertive discipline is a behavioral modification system, it is therefore rooted in behaviourism. Unlike Skinner's operant conditioning model however, mine is democratic in that the rules will be made for the students by the students, under my guidance. As Canter (1992, p. 54) points out, by including students in the decision making process of the rules it 'will give them ownership in the

classroom discipline plan'. The students will work collaboratively during the first lesson to design the rules according to the following procedure:

1. As Canter (1992, p. 54) suggests, students may choose rules that are too harsh or inappropriate, so in order to set the correct tone, I will brainstorm suitable rules with the class and write one on the board before students break off into groups to brainstorm together. Students are to choose the two best rules from their group and write them on the board.
2. As a group, we will then decide which rules are the most appropriate. I will naturally have an idea of what I think is suitable and students will be guided into a variant of these. Examples of appropriate rules:
 - 'Always respect others
 - Avoid anti social behavior
 - Don't interrupt or yell out
 - Follow instructions
 - Gain permission before using others equipment' (Barlett et al. 2009, p. 474)
3. Students will then brainstorm the rationale behind the choice of rules: Why do we want/need this? As Snowman et al. (Bartlett et al. 2009, p. 478) argue 'you can make regulations seem desirable rather than restrictive if you discuss why they are needed'.

Once the rules are agreed to, students will be informed that this is the expected behavior. Collaboratively, students will work on a poster for the class featuring the rules.

When student behavior is in accordance with the rules, they will receive 'positive recognition' both as a group and individually (Canter & Canter 1992, p. 57). If the class has been working well, positive recognition may be in the form of positive feedback such as 'this is great work everyone'. If a greater reward is necessary, they may finish their work earlier to play an educational yet interesting game or get to choose an excursion. Individual effort may again

simply be rewarded by positive feedback or a note home informing his/her carer/s of their effort. As Canter (1992, p. 58) argues, positive recognition is valuable as 'students are more likely to continue their appropriate behavior in order to receive the recognition they need'. This will play an important role in preventive management as students will be less likely to act up therefore making further intervention unnecessary.

Naturally, some students will at times choose to ignore the classroom rules. This is when escalating consequences will be acted upon, which will be something [...] students do not like, but [...] [will] never be physically or psychologically harmful (Canter & Canter 1992, p. 80). The students will be made aware of these and be implemented in following sequence:

1. Using a non verbal cue, my finger to the mouth, I will make the student aware that they are behaving inappropriately. This will give the student the opportunity to correct his/her behavior without drawing the class' attention to him/her and therefore not interrupt lesson flow.
2. If behavior persists, the student will be warned verbally to stop the behavior and reminded that 'they' are choosing to ignore the class rules thus making the student take ownership of his/her behavior.
3. If the behavior continues, I will again ask the student to stop, then saying 'we need to talk about this after class'. This is when I will get the opportunity to inquire if there is something wrong.
4. If the student chooses to ignore this, I will then say 'we need to talk to someone else about this' and I will ask the student to stay behind after class to meet with the coordinator.
5. If the behavior still persists, I will remove the student from the class immediately and talk to her/him outside to try to find out what is wrong. Depending on the severity and how the student responds to me, I may then even escort the student to the principal.

Students will be told that it is their choice to behave in accordance with the rules or to break them which will make them take ownership of their behavior. As Malmgren et al. (2005, p. 36) recount, 'an effective behavior management program is [one] fueled by informed student choices'. Students are aware of teacher expectations and what will occur when they choose to meet those expectations and, conversely, what will occur when they choose not to adhere to the established classroom rules.

N.B: As alluded to in points 3 and 5, bad behavior is often symptomatic of problems the student may be having and which I hope to pick up on during my meet and greet sessions with students thus avoiding inappropriate behaviour and subsequent escalating intervention.

An inclusive classroom

I also aim to develop an inclusive classroom culture in which there is not only mutual respect between me and the students but between students also. I hope to achieve this by including units of work on the varying cultures in the group so students develop a genuine understanding of the cultures rather than stereotypical ones (Grossman 2004, p. 40). I will also invite students to talk regularly about their culture in classroom. This is especially important for my English as an Additional Language (EAL) and indigenous students. In addition, I will include group work and cooperative learning tasks in which students work collaboratively towards a collective accomplishment. Apart from the obvious social benefits, I believe a more cohesive group is one in which inappropriate behavior is less likely to occur.

Engaging students in learning activities:

I found the following points on how to engage learners very useful:

- 'Provide visual aids to explain abstract concepts
- Use in class activities to reinforce newly presented material
- Help students create a link between new material and something already learned
- Treat students with respect

- Be enthusiastic' (Pointloma, n.d.)

As a pre-service teacher, I also need to be aware that students bring their individual learning styles into the classroom therefore I will to employ a range of strategies and activities in order to engage students. These include visual aids such as mind maps for visual learners, group work for concrete learners and discovery learning for intuitive learners.

Although at times it will be necessary to have teacher-centred activities, I am also aware that the most engaging ones for students are often those which are student-centred. These include activities informed by constructivism in which students actively construct their own knowledge often through group work. This is empowering for students as they begin to take ownership of their learning through teacher guided activities. In addition, I will engage students in cooperative learning where they work together to achieve a collective result.

Clear, concise task instructions also help students to engage quickly with an activity which I have improved in since I have been teaching ESL.

A further aspect in preventive management is to have a clear, calm and orderly presence. This is crucial at the beginning of lessons in order to settle the students for the lesson.

Dealing with conflict

A cohesive classroom in combination with my preventive management should work towards preventing conflict however; there will be times when hostility arises. Each school will undoubtedly have its own policy which I will seek out upon arrival at a school. One successful program recounted by Barlett et al. (2009, p. 501) is, 'The Resolving Conflict Creatively Program' (RCCP) in which students are taught 'non violent conflict resolution'. Trained student mentors act when there is conflict by suggesting that the students involved move to a quieter place where they can talk. The mediators then establish certain ground rules such as allowing each student a chance to talk without being interrupted. A resolution is then agreed to. I would adopt the same procedure calling on the wellbeing/welfare person if I feel the situation is serious or the problem could not be resolved.

An example of a classroom activity that illustrates my approach

The following activity will be part of my German class under the dimension of intercultural knowledge and language awareness. In line with my preventive management strategy, in which the 'learning context[s] out-compete[s] inappropriate behavior', I draw on constructivism and cooperative learning in order to fully engage students (Arthur, Gordon & Butterfield 2003, p.1). These activities include brainstorming and discovery learning. I also include multi media.

The aim of the activity is to develop students' intercultural competency in the German context. In particular, students will deepen their understanding of the varying levels of informality and formality in German depending on context and social distance.

The session begins with a class brainstorming of the term 'culture'. This constructivist pedagogy will immediately engage students as they bring their own learning to the task and generate new knowledge.

I predict students will offer the term language as a part of culture. I then ask them to think about how culture is built into language. I ask them to think about address terms in Australian English such as 'mate' versus 'Mr'. This is done in small groups using cooperative learning whereby the group works collaboratively on a collective end. The individual groups then report their comments.

I predict that students will make a connection between address usage and level of informality/formality, i.e. in Australian culture mate is mainly used between friends and informally while honorifics are used formally.

I then issue a worksheet featuring two German dialogues: one between two friends and the other between an adolescent and an adult shop assistant with a gap exercise in which students are to fill in the missing words while watching the video.

Following the video students compare their answers in their small groups. The task is for them to look at the address terms used by the people and to work out what is happening. Why are the two friends and the adult addressing the

young person using du while the adolescent uses Sie to address the adult shop assistant?

I expect students to suggest du usage as an intimate term or an age marker while Sie is used formally or as a marker of respect.

For several reasons, I expect the students to be fully engaged in the above activity, so that inappropriate behavior does not surface. Firstly, I use a variety of mediums including multi media to engage the students. Secondly, I use inquiry based constructivist pedagogy in which students solve a problem and discover something new by drawing on their existing knowledge. I aim to maintain the appropriate behavior while students are working in groups by providing positive feedback such as: 'you are all working well – well done' or 'great suggestions everyone'. Should inappropriate behavior surface however, I will enact my intervention.

My responsibilities as a teacher are varied and include facilitator of learning, role model, assessor, as well as a person who is mindful of student wellbeing. More specific to classroom management are: responsible for managing students, responsible for providing a safe environment, 'seeing that students work together in a confined space for long periods and ensuring that they learn' (Brown 2004, p. 266)

Resources

As a pre-service teacher, I will seek out my student mentor to whom I will enquire about a school classroom management policy. I will then compare it with mine. If there is a mismatch, I will seek the advice of the mentor and implement the one advised. My mentor is also the person I will seek out should I have classroom management problems. I will also quickly establish who the coordinator is in case my mentor teacher is not available when needed. The other resource I will use is the wellbeing/welfare person in case I have behavior problems with particular students.

As a qualified teacher, I will seek out the classroom management policy in place and familiarize myself with it upon arrival at the school. I will compare it with mine outlined above and amend if necessary. I will then make a time to

meet with the coordinator and the principal to seek their approval and support and to make them aware of their involvement in my assertive discipline intervention. I will also introduce myself to the wellbeing/welfare person and get their opinion of my management plan.

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