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Classroom Management and Discipline Plan

Classroom Organization

Room Set-Up

Desks will be organized in small clusters of three students each. Ideally, all three desks in each cluster will be facing toward the board. However, this particular room set-up requires a specific type of desk that has slanted corners, instead of a simple rectangle. This type of desk allows for multiple desks to be arranged side-by-side in small clusters, and still permits each student to face the front of the classroom. If this type of desk is not available in my future classroom, I will organize desks in clusters of two or four. Each student will be facing the side of the room, but I want to ensure that no student has their back to the front of the classroom. Students will be assigned specific seating.

As Sprick discusses in his text, this “cluster” arrangement has a variety of benefits. This arrangement creates an accessible classroom for the teacher, who can easily circulate and facilitate student activity (Sprick, 70). Additionally, this classroom arrangement is ideal for cooperative learning tasks and collaborative groupwork, activities I hope to incorporate in my lesson plans. However, I must also be aware that this cluster arrangement may prompt talking and off-task interaction between students, so I must pay close attention to the different personalities and learning styles of my students, and assign a seating arrangement accordingly. When I spoke with my cooperating teacher (CT) about seating assignments, he explained that finding the perfect seating arrangement is a careful, continual process, that should be adjusted throughout the year as you learn more about your students personalities and learning styles.

Physical Decoration

As a social studies teacher, I would like to decorate my classroom with materials relevant to the

course subject. If I am teaching the second part of American history, for example, I could hang famous pictures of historical events, or quotes from important historical figures. Or, if I'm teaching World History, I could display a large map labeling all the countries of the world. Regardless of what specific course I teach, it is important to create a classroom that sparks students' curiosity about the subject and contributes to a creative learning environment. Additionally, throughout the year, I want to display students' work in the classroom, to provide them with a sense of ownership and pride when they enter my class. This display could also serve as a positive reinforcer - students who do well on class projects will be rewarded by having their work displayed in the classroom.

Plan for Students with Special Needs

Before the school year begins, I will review potential IEP and 504 plans for each student, paying special attention to their specified classroom needs - for example, if a student must sit in the front of the classroom, I will adjust my seating arrangement accordingly. Additionally, I will adapt lesson plans according to students' different needs and skills. In my Methods class at the School of Education, which is specifically for Social Studies students, we must provide a list of adaptations for each lesson that can be applied if needed.

Safe and Caring Classroom Environment

I hope to create a safe and caring classroom environment by employing the above techniques. It is important to create a classroom that immediately welcomes student learning, and I hope to achieve this by decorating the room with posters, quotes, and photographs relevant to the course. Additionally, by displaying student work, I hope to develop a sense of class community and encourage student excellence. Furthermore, I hope to encourage this sense of community and academic achievement by seating students in small clusters to encourage collaboration in the classroom.

Classroom Routines, Procedures, and Time Management

On the first day of school, I will establish a structured classroom procedure that students will be expected to follow for the entirety of the school year. In order to do this, I will explain a typical day for students, outlining the necessary procedures and routines that all students will be expected to follow.

When they arrive to class, each student will see if there are any handouts on a table set up in the front of the class. If there are, students will pick up one of each handout, and then sit at their assigned seating. If a homework assignment is due, students will place their homework in a designated class folder on the same table. Once they have done this, students will sit at their seat and then examine the board for information regarding the day's lesson.

Before each class, I will write the lesson topic, objectives, homework, and warm-up prompt in a designated area on the whiteboard. When they arrive to class, students will sit quietly at their desks, and read this information. Each class will begin with a warm-up prompt. In this warm-up, students will respond to a question, quote, picture, etc. that directly relates to the current lesson. Students will respond to this question in a notebook specific to my class, and I will collect and review notebooks for a participation grade each month. Students will answer this prompt quietly for three to five minutes, and then we will discuss the prompt as a class for another three to five minutes.

After we discuss the warm-up prompt, I will review the lesson topic and objectives with the students, and then continue with the day's lesson. The class routine will vary depending on the style of the lesson, but students will be expected to behave respectfully and quietly. If the lesson is a lecture, students will be expected to listen respectfully and quietly while I am speaking. However, questions are encouraged, though each student must raise his or her hand and wait to be called on. If the lesson involves a group activity, students will wait quietly to receive instructions, and then follow these instructions

accordingly. If students are expected to work independently or in a group, I will give specific assignment and time expectations, so that students understand the timeline of the lesson, and what is expected of them.

For the last three minutes of class, I will explain the homework, if there is any, and ask for any questions regarding the lesson or the assignment. Students will then wait to be dismissed, and will leave the classroom quietly, pushing in their chair and picking up all class materials when they leave.

In order to prevent downtime and maintain activity flow, I will always plan on having “extra time” assignments for students who complete their work ahead of time. This will prevent students from becoming distracted and enhance their learning.

If I have an inclusion class, I will speak with the learning specialist before school begins, to work out a specific management plan for pull-out and push-in services. Though I think this plan might vary depending on the needs of the students, my cooperating teacher has a plan that I think works well. He seats students with special needs toward the front corner of the classroom, while the learning specialist monitors these students nearby. This seating arrangement means that both the teacher and the learning specialist are easily accessible if a student needs help. When students need to be pulled out, the learning specialist quietly leads the students into another classroom, without disrupting the rest of the class. The learning specialist speaks with the students before school begins at the “Open House” day explaining this procedure, and expects students to follow this routine quietly and responsibly. Students are typically pulled out for tests and in-class reading activities. The learning specialist in my cooperating teacher’s classroom executes this routine so well that I often don’t even realize when they have left the classroom. I plan on implementing a similar procedure in my classroom.

Classroom Organization and Management

Student Groupwork

I think groupwork is an important part of education that teaches students the importance of collaboration, and encourages the understanding of multiple viewpoints. Because I plan on arranging my classroom in desk clusters, if I have a classroom activity, students will simply work in their assigned seating groups. This means that when I arranging my seating chart, I will also need to consider which students will work well together. I plan on implementing this system in the beginning of the year, so that students can learn to work with their classmates. I will explain to students that if they prove that they can work well in these groups in class, I will allow them to choose their own groups to work with later on. However, I will still be sure to monitor students' productivity if this is case, as many students might be tempted to simply sit and talk with their friends instead of working.

Again, I think it is important to continually tweak this plan according to my students needs, a practice that my cooperating teacher encouraged when I spoke with him about classroom management. I may find that one class works particularly well in their assigned groups, while another may excel when working with their friends. As Sprick writes, "An effective management and discipline plan is not a canned program or a static entity" (Sprick, 70). I too do not think there is a perfect "one-size-fits-all" approach to classroom management. However, it is important to begin with a framework, and then adjust this framework as I learn more about my students throughout the school year.

Student Motivation and Engagement

In order to effectively motivate and engage my students, I first must get to know them. This can be achieved in a variety of different ways - perhaps through a survey, like we conducted for class, or through one-on-one meetings after school or during an advisory period, or through an assignment where students must write about themselves. Regardless of the method, this exercise is beneficial in two ways: firstly, it helps me, as the teacher, get to know my students, but it also communicates to my students that I want to get to know them personally, and not simply as another face in a class of twenty students. On the

first day, I plan on devising a sort of survey to pass out to students, where they explain their interests, likes, dislikes, hobbies, and other information that will be beneficial throughout the school year.

My cooperating teacher emphasized the importance of integrating students' interests in lesson plans. "Find out what the kids want to learn about," he said, "and find a way to bring it into the class." If I can connect my subject content to my students lives and interests, I can hopefully further engage them in learning, and get them to fully invest in their education.

On another level, multiple education scholars stress the importance of building a personal relationship with students. "You will dramatically increase the probability of having cooperative and motivated students if they perceive that you both like and respect them," Sprick writes (Sprick, 258). Though I can't (and shouldn't) expect every student to be my friend, I should make an effort to build relationships with my students, and demonstrate that I am invested in their achievement and growth in my class.

Though I hope students will be motivated to succeed in my class because of the engaging, interesting material and personal relationship I have hopefully built, I also acknowledge that sometimes, students need a little extra motivation to do well. When I surveyed my cooperating teacher's class, many students indicated that they would like to receive candy as a reward. Though the success of expected extrinsic rewards is still "hotly debated" by education scholars and psychologists alike, I think that using some sort of tangible reward system in joint with intangible rewards could be effective (Weinstein, 235). In my reflection on my survey results, I wrote how I could keep a jar of M&Ms at my desk, and reward students who had received a certain grade on a test, for example.

I see the benefits of tangible, extrinsic rewards in the classroom; however, I believe intangible rewards, such as public encouragement or positive feedback. Sprick writes of positive feedback, "When done well, it confirms for students that they are on the right track and increases the probability that they will demonstrate the same behaviors in the future" (Sprick, 261). I want to provide students with

constructive feedback that is descriptive, specific, and accurate, three attributes that Sprick outlines as essential to the method's effectiveness. I think additional intangible rewards, such as public encouragement or acknowledgement of a student's success, is an effective way to motivate students. On their surveys, many students marked that they would like for teachers to notice their work more often. In my classroom, I hope to celebrate students' success to motivate them to do well.

Student Misbehavior and Discipline Plan

Discipline Theory and Classroom Expectations

My theory is that discipline should be used to prevent and remediate misbehavior, and not simply punish a certain action. In my classroom, I will establish a general expectation of respect. As I mentioned in my first discussion, this is the approach my cooperating teacher takes with his class. Though it works well with his class, I need to be aware that this low-structure approach might not work with all classes. However, I want to try this approach first, and then adjust accordingly.

On the first day of school, I will begin class by explaining to students the general expectation of respect in the classroom. I will then ask students what they think this means, guiding them toward ideas of timeliness, no talking while the teacher is speaking, etc. I will then ask the students what they expect of me, as their teacher. I will have them think of ideas on their own at first, and then share their ideas with the class, while I write their responses on a posterboard. Once this activity is completed, I will ask them what they think I should expect of them. Again I will have them brainstorm on their own, and then share with the class, while I record their answers on a posterboard. Once they have finished sharing their responses, I will then add anything I expect in my classroom that may not have been mentioned, such as no sleeping in class, or following daily established procedures, to the board. I will then keep these posterboards for each class section. If there is a problem with classroom behavior throughout the year, I will return to these classroom expectations, and if needed, display these posters to serve as a reminder of

expectations.

Discipline Plan

My overall plan for discipline will be rooted in the desire to understand the reason behind the behavior, and prevent the misbehavior from occurring again. When I discussed discipline procedures with my cooperating teacher, he stressed the importance of “laying down the law” the first few weeks of school. Any infraction - no matter how small - must be immediately addressed and remediated. This sets a tone for the rest of school year, and enforces the expectation that classroom rules and procedures must be followed.

As I discussed in discussion three, misbehavior will be disciplined according to the “level” of the action. For minor misbehavior, such as daydreaming or texting, I will employ various techniques that target the behavior without disrupting the entire class. These techniques include proximity (that is, standing near a student if he is talking loudly during class), the dreaded “teacher look,” or simply quietly addressing the student when there is a break in the class. Though it is important to address this behavior immediately, and in a manner that clearly conveys the action is not welcome in the classroom, it is also important not to embarrass the student in front of their peers. Humiliation will only lead to resentment, and possibly future misbehavior.

Serious misbehaviors and chronic misbehavior must be similarly addressed in a fair yet uncompromising manner. The response to these more public misbehaviors again sets an expectation for all students, and hopefully will serve to deter any future misbehavior. Appropriate disciplinary action will be established prior to the occurrence of the misbehavior. For example, I will explain to my students that if they fail to complete their homework, they must then complete the assignment during their free period or lunch. Fair and consistent enforcement of classroom expectations will serve to prevent misbehavior, and makes students aware of my classroom expectations.

It is just as important to address the root cause behind types of misbehavior, in addition to enforcing the proper disciplinary action. As I wrote in my discussion, in addition to enforcing the proper disciplinary action, I plan on taking the student aside, explaining to him or her the reason his or her behavior was disruptive, and then asking for an explanation of their behavior. Perhaps, for example, a student was unable to complete an online assignment for homework because she does not have access to a computer at home. It is important to hear the student's point of view, which can offer deeper explanation of misbehavior and help me understand and assist my students. This approach is especially important for chronic misbehavior, as I must uncover the true reason behind the action, and adjust disciplinary action accordingly.

For "thorny" misbehavior problems, such as cheating and physical violence, it is important to consult the school's official policies. In addition to following these official procedures, I would also implement my own disciplinary action. In addition to following these official procedures, I would also implement my own discipline policy. If a student is caught cheating, for example, I would have the student write a paper on why cheating is wrong. This disciplinary action can be the same for several different behaviors as well, such as stealing or fighting. Major misbehaviors such as these should not be taken lightly. In order to deter any future "thorny problems," I would also address my students and review classroom and schoolwide rules and disciplinary procedures. However, I would be especially mindful to not "call out" the particular student who violated a rule, but instead remind students of the importance and necessity of these rules. In order to prevent these "thorny" issues, such as violence, from arising in the first place, I will review the school's official policies on the matters, and encourage a class discussion unearthing the reasons why these issues are a problem not simply in school, but on the larger societal scale.

Positive Behavior Management

In class, we discussed the validity and effectiveness of two different discipline systems, the Zero Tolerance and Positive Behavior Support Systems. In my final exam, I argued that the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) System is a more effective approach to discipline because it works to remediate behavior, and not simply punish it. In my classroom, I plan on approaching behavior management and discipline through a PBS lens. I will define, recognize, and applaud positive behavior to encourage a plan centered on the students' growth and achievement. I will address misbehavior when necessary, but the main goal of my classroom will be to establish and encourage essential, positive habits for my students. I will achieve this by clearly explaining examples of positive behavior to my students, and then recognizing and positively reinforcing (either through verbal encouragement or acknowledgement) these behaviors.