

Philosophy on Classroom Management

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First and foremost, the essential aspect of classroom management is respect. Though simple in nature, the concept of respect branches out rather expansively. It begins with the more self-evident concepts, such as respect for peers, respect for the teacher, and respect for the classroom and materials. Respect is applicable beyond this, however; respect for oneself, respect for the content of the class, and respect for other cultures are equally important to classroom and behavioral management. Furthermore, it is not just the students who must exhibit respect; the teacher must exhibit equitable respect as well: “an atmosphere of mutual respect... result(s) [in] a classroom where more learning takes place” (“How To Achieve...”). Respect is of paramount importance in the structuring of the classroom environment and management policies.

Additionally, respect directly connects to motivation. Motivation, specifically of the internal and intrinsic variety, is incredibly important for maintaining an engaging and effective classroom and atmosphere. These are the ideal forms of motivation; if the motivation is coming from the task itself (intrinsic), or within the student (internal), it will naturally be more potent than the third motivational source, external motivation. According to Campbell (2018), “external motivating techniques can help bridge the gap of engagement until intrinsic motivation builds and takes over.”

Though external motivation can be useful, it should not comprise the sole, or even largest, source of motivation. This can be avoided through the facilitation of respect. In this context, respect for the class content drives the motivation. If students respect the content, they will see a level of value in it, helping to build their internal motivation towards learning and engaging with the content. Additionally, out of respect for the students’ educations and needs,

the teacher should strive to design intrinsically motivating tasks, creating a classroom where both intrinsic and internal motivation abounds, due to different manifestations of respect.

Student engagement can be fostered through a comfortable and respectful classroom atmosphere. Legitimate and practiced respect, as stated above, will culminate in increased intrinsic and internal motivation, which, in turn, will boost student engagement. Additionally, student comfort is important. Though tied to respect, teachers should aim to create an air of comfort and security in their classroom, so that students feel safe allowing themselves to learn; atmospheres that are either too tense or too relaxed will ultimately cause either poor engagement or poor student behavior.

To facilitate an atmosphere of comfort and respect, the teacher should first ensure they practice what they preach. It would be hypocritical to disrespectfully demand respect of one's students. However, the teacher must balance this with the aforementioned variety of respects; a teacher who does not exhibit self-respect would not be a good model of respect for students. Teachers must model respect at all times, valuing the content they teach, the students in their class, and the many elements that make up the classroom. They should make their respect known in subtle ways, such as asking the class for their opinions, and taking genuine interest in their responses. By modeling respect, teachers will create the respectful atmosphere that will lend itself toward a classroom of motivated and engaged students.

Expectations and Procedures

Classroom procedures should be kept simple and sensible. Additionally, there should not be so many that students feel overwhelmed by the number of logistic expectations placed on them. It is likely that the classroom will run smoothly if procedures are put in place at the

beginning and the end of classes, and if a uniform procedure is created for the retrieval and replacement of classroom materials, such as books, instruments, accessories, or craft supplies.

For entrances, students should know where to go, and how to behave on their way there. This can be coupled with the beginning of instruction from the teacher, to make sure their focus is not left in the hallway. Exits should simply reverse this procedure, with students still exhibiting proper behavior, while they form a line to exit the room. This time, the exit procedure can be combined with a summation of the day's lesson, or an alternative closure strategy, in order to maintain uniform student attention through the process.

Materials pose the most likely risk of losing track of student behavior; though they may be engaged in the lesson, introducing the variable of a new instrument or item may contribute to increased chaotic energy. However, if students are familiar with the expected procedures for retrieving materials, this danger can be avoided. This will be made easier by creating a uniform expected behavior for material retrieval, such as "form X lines at the cabinet, and wait your turn to get [insert material here]," or something to this extent. If each classroom material has its own specific expected behavior, students may begin to confuse procedures, causing focus and behavior to drop in quality due to the confusion.

Student instincts can be considered in the creation of expected procedures. For example, if students automatically enter a classroom by staying in their line until they reach their assigned seat, this instinct could become the standard expected behavior. However, this cannot be the case for every procedure and every class, as some class' instincts will be less constructive than others. Instead of creating a uniform expectation for every single class that a teacher sees, general behavioral expectations should be put in place for how to carry out procedures, while specific student and class instincts can drive what they do to achieve the desired result.

Clear instruction should be used to teach expected procedures to students. Though their instincts may drive the creation of these procedures in some form or another, the behavior itself must still be formalized into an expected procedure. This can also be accomplished through breaking down how the class should perform a procedure, or even walking through the procedure to check for correct behavior. Trial and error can also be employed; if a class fails to enter the room using the expected procedure and behavior, they can form a line in the hallway and attempt to correctly enter the room again, until they begin to absorb the proper procedure for the task.

Transitions

When transitioning between activities, a “herd” mentality would be easiest to control, as the entire class will be participating in a new activity together. This way, off-task behavior will become more obvious to the teacher, and can be more easily compensated for, as well as diagnosed and addressed. To determine student comprehension of directions, short phrases or tasks, such as “clap once if you can hear my voice” or “nod if you understand” can be used for swift and effective checks of understanding. When students are lining up, songs can be used. Students can sing and move with the song to form their line. Should the classroom teacher be late in picking up their students, this song can then be turned into a game song, which can be played until the arrival of the classroom teacher. Other small activities, such as sing-along karaoke on the projector, or brief call and response songs, can be used to engage students up until the final seconds of class time, ended by their departure from class. This could also be a good time for a summative activity, to briefly encompass the day’s activities and content.

Classroom Rules Poster

Below is my example classroom rules poster. Though some of the text is difficult to read in a Word Document, this would be blown up on cardstock, so it would be more visible.

M

V

S

I

C



*R*espect others, yourself, the materials, and music!

*V*se your musical voice when we sing!

*L*isten closely when we play music and sing!



*E*xhibit the behavior expected of you at school!

*S*how effort and energy during class!

In determining these rules, I began with the principle of respect. This made the acrostic “R” rule simple; respect is critical, so respect everything involved in the class. Second, the “U” acrostic came about due to the concept of respect for music. When students sing with their musical voices, instead of their regular voices, it brings a new level of respect for the music being sung. This was a concept I picked up in placement, as the notion of a “musical voice” is used when student behavior becomes wild and unruly during a song. For the “L” rule, a similar philosophy toward listening was adopted – active listening both keeps students engaged and is respectful toward the musical content of the class. “E” was harder to devise, but the rule I settled on was important; so long as students understand the word “exhibit,” they should know to show the behavior expected of them throughout the school day. Finally, the last rule of showing energy and effort is important in maintaining engagement in students.

Confronting Misbehavior

When it comes to addressing inappropriate student behavior, the most successful strategy will be to have a wealth of strategies from which to choose. Students, as with all people, are inherently unique. Therefore, assuming the same strategy would work for every student’s poor behavior would be ill conceived. In the confrontation of misbehavior, teachers should approach the situation as a doctor; they must diagnose the cause of the misbehavior and prescribe the appropriate behavior management technique from their vast “medicine cabinet” of strategies. Assumed in this is that teachers have developed an abundant plethora of techniques for dealing with poor student behavior, from which they can draw in a time of need.

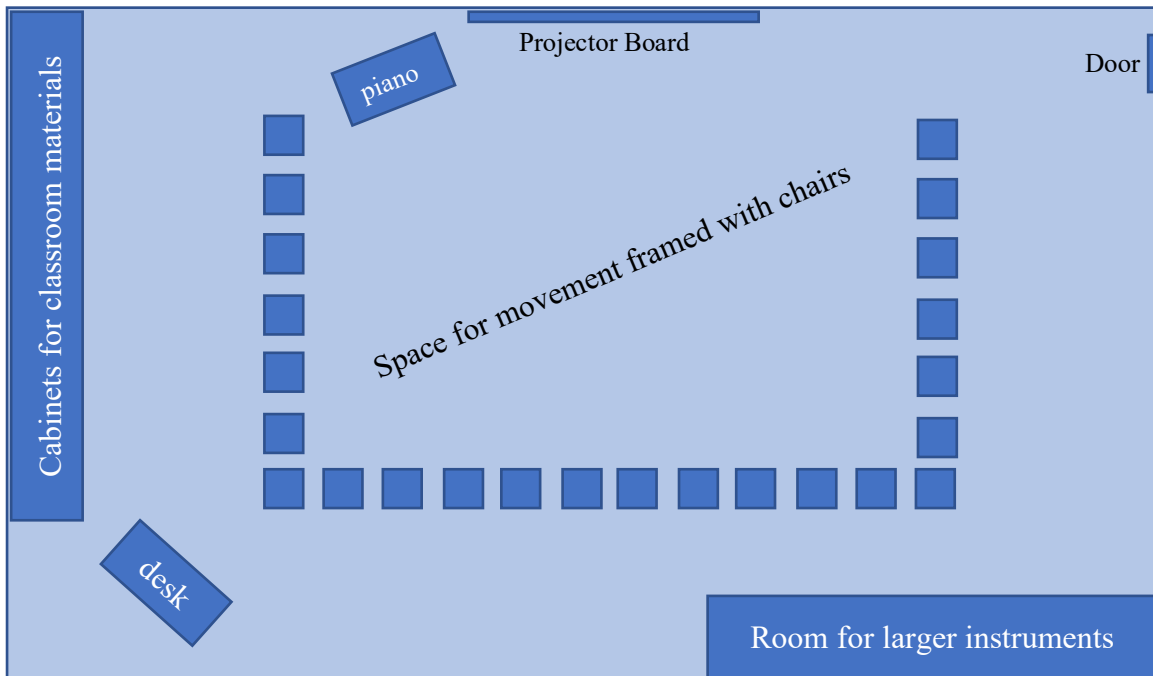
Though this analogy accurately reflects the theoretical process for dealing with behavior management, it is important to consider the pacing of education, especially at the elementary level. It is simply not feasible to take a “doctor’s visit” worth of time to solve misbehavior. Due

to the fast pace, teachers must treat this as a trial and error process, moving on instinct when the behavior is first addressed, then modifying their response in accordance with the previous strategy's efficacy. This is something that, to some extent, can be taught, but will be developed through experience, both in developing a large array of strategies, and in getting to know one's students, as this will help the teacher select what they believe to be the most effective technique.

Classroom Environment

Learning student names is something I certainly struggle with. However, the following three techniques will be beneficial for learning the names of the students I see. First of all, there are the common strategies for learning names. These include things like learning names through mnemonics, identifying physical features of students and associating them with names, and flat out looking over rosters in moments of down time to familiarize myself and commit to memory the names of my various students. Second, introductory songs and "name games," such as "Up the Ladder" and chants created for introductions, can be sung played at the beginning of the year to aid in the name learning process. Additionally, these can be continued further into the year, so long as new musical concepts are being applied to the game or song to maintain intrinsic student motivation in performing the song or playing the game. Lastly, technology can be utilized for name learning. In my placement, my host teacher takes attendance and assessment notes subtly through an iPad and will call out names she sees. This gives her a very discreet chance to work on name memorization in the active context of a class period.

Below is a diagram of my ideal classroom layout. In terms of instruments, I would like access to various smaller world percussion instruments, which could be stored in a cabinet, a classroom set of tubanos, boomwhackers, and a few different mallet keyboard instruments. Additionally, recorders and ukuleles would be ideal, and could also be kept in cabinets.



Procedures would be put in place for retrieving both materials from the cabinets, and instruments from the designated area in the bottom right hand corner. The majority of class activities would most likely take place with the students either in their seats, or within the framed area. This setup could be easily adapted in accordance with specific classroom dimensions, the quantity and size of classroom materials, and the size of the largest class that would need to fit in the classroom. Additionally, preparation can be done by the teacher to avoid fetching instruments, such as setting materials beneath the seats of students prior to their class period, so they would not need built in time to retrieve and return the necessary materials. This setup also allows for flexibility, as there is a decent amount of usable extra space, which could be modified to keep the classroom consistent with other classrooms in the school. This would contribute to the students' sense of comfort in the music classroom which, as was previously stated, would coincide with increased student engagement and motivation.

As for seating arrangements, my current placement classroom is set up with a single arced form of chairs, which frames the large space for game songs and movement-based activities. This is something I'd like to emulate, as I've seen its current success in my placement. It allows for a large variety of musical and pedagogical activities, while easily and comfortably fitting every student in the classroom. This is included in my above diagram.

Both an electronic and physical filing system is imperative for keeping track of a variety of classes. I personally find electronic organization to be the easiest; however, keeping both systems up to date with records and resources is crucial, as it creates a backup system in the event of a failure. It also allows for increased access to files for each class – if electronic is easier than paper, or vice-versa, either can be called upon to satisfy a spontaneous need. Essentially, to keep track of the various class record, a dual paper-electronic system is the best option.

Communication with Parents and Community

In today's educational climate, transparency is critical. It is important that parents and community members have direct access to detailed information about the music program. Fortunately, technology can be incredibly useful for this goal. First off, information, including curriculum, policies, and a schedule of important events throughout the school year should be posted on the school website. Additionally, some institutions may have social media pages, and even might have pages specific to the music department or program. These should be advertised and utilized, as they can successfully reach a different demographic of parents and community members. Other channels of communication, including mailings, e-mail lists, or papers sent by proxy of students can be utilized according to teacher discretion.

Works Cited

Campbell, Patricia Shehan, and Carol Scott-Kassner. *Music in Childhood: from Preschool Through the Elementary Grades*. 4e ed., Cengage, 2018.

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