

Personal Classroom Management Plan

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Teachers need to know their line. High school students are known for pushing teachers' buttons until they break. Therefore, it is essential that a teacher remain in complete control of her classroom at all times. In order to remain in control of a classroom, a teacher must have a plan that she will follow. The plan does not necessarily have to be written down explicitly, but for beginning teachers, and even some experienced teachers, it would be beneficial. By writing down a personal management plan, a teacher has a hierarchy of discipline and an idea of how she will deal with behavioral issues that come up. Without this hierarchy, a teacher has nothing to fall back on when they no longer know how to deal with a situation or a particular student. Personal management plans, however, are also very individual to each teacher. A teacher may not be able to take another teacher's personal management plan and use it as their own, as discipline, even in a classroom, is a very personal process and must be considered within the personality and beliefs of the individual teacher. In my personal management plan, I will outline the verbal, non-verbal, and other power base actions that I believe are applicable to me in order that I may have an idea of how to keep control of my own classroom. I will include a diagram of what my ideal classroom would look like so that I may remain in control and sight of all students at all times, and include what I would like to have happen if I can no longer control a particular student or action of students. Personal management plans need to be comprehensive and effective for the teacher implementing the discipline techniques.

The base of this personal management plan is referent power. Referent power is based upon interpersonal relationships that a teacher builds with her class. My personal management

plan is based upon my desire and ability to influence my students into respecting me and feeling as though I care about them. The referent power base, I believe, is the strongest of the power bases because it depends on the individual student, but it does not depend on external factors. For instance, students who feel as though the teacher is in a position of authority because the student respects the teacher, and the student feels respected by the teacher, are more likely to behave according to the preset rules. The power that the teacher has is regardless of the happenings of the day, or the assignment that the teacher intends to assign. The students believe that the teacher deserves to be in a position of authority because of the personality of the teacher, the position that the teacher's personality puts her in, and the perception that the students have of the teacher. In order to do this, however, a teacher needs to build a relationship with the students, and the students need to place value on that relationship. I believe that students want to respect and enjoy school, and teachers merely need to give them an opportunity to do so.

If the referent power base does not work for me, I would turn to the expert power base. Students of all grades respond to the expert power base, but it is the teacher's job to influence the students into believing that the teacher is really an expert, and that the information that the teacher has is essential to the students' life. The issue that I believe I would have with this power base is that I have a difficult time explaining to students that what I have to say is important when they do not feel that it is important. I can explain to them that I think it's important that they learn what I am attempting to teach them, but I have little ability in making them believe that what I have to say is particularly important if they do not already think that. Therefore, the expert power base may be effective for certain teachers, but I would not use it unless my other preferential power base does not work. However, I would be more likely to use the expert power base than the behaviorist model coercive power base. The coercive power base is not that

effective, I believe, because students become accustomed to punishment or reward, so they will stop responding and become immune very quickly.

Ideal Classroom

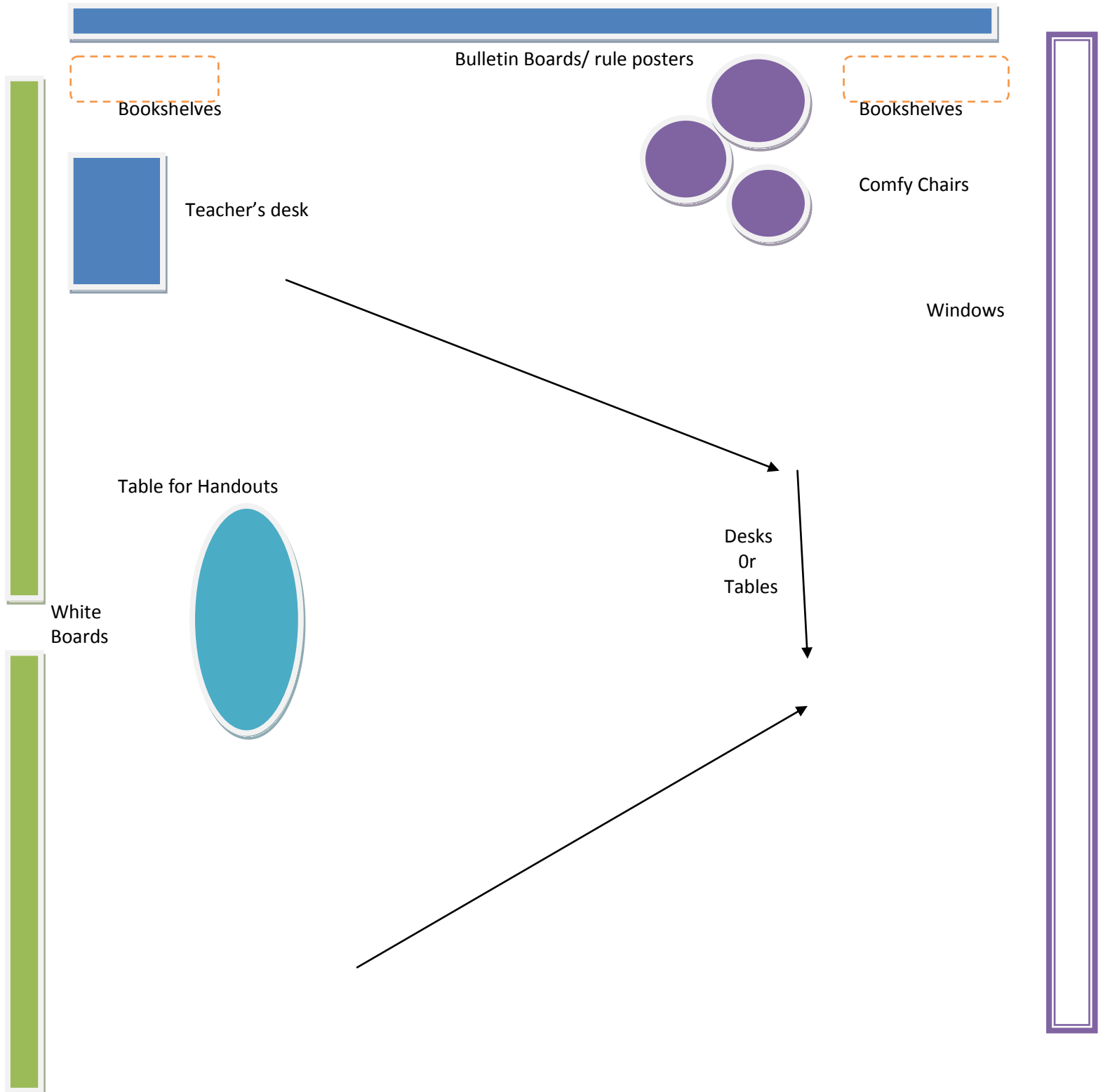
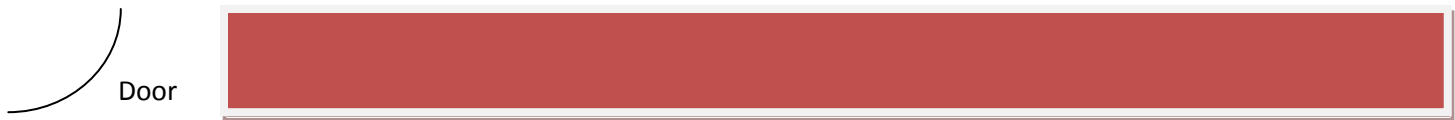


Table with Computer and Chairs



The physical environment of the classroom, shown in the figure above, shows a classroom where every individual student can see every other student in the classroom. I believe it is essential that every student has a view of every other student so that everybody feels equal and everybody can be held responsible for their own actions. It is also designed that I, as the teacher, can see every student at all times. If desks were available, I would space them so that I could walk in and out of desks to always be in close proximity with each student. The table formation, however, makes it easier to facilitate class discussions and debate. The areas for individual work, such as the comfy chairs and the computers based against the wall, allow for students to remove themselves from the group discussion if they feel the need to do so. The bulletin boards allow for posting of information, such as rules and regulations for specific activities, or other instructional bulletin boards. The windows are at the back of the class to diminish distractions from outside, and maximize light intake so that the classroom is a welcoming place. Overall, although I know that this is not likely a realistic setup for a classroom because one would need a very large room in order to have this set-up, I would one day like to teach in a classroom much like the one I have designed.

It is difficult to state precisely what would be my classroom rules as I have minimal experience in the classroom. However, I know what a few would be; the first rule would be to treat everybody with courtesy. The reason I do not say “respect” is because respect is earned, and I do not expect my students to respect me immediately. However, I do expect them to treat me with courtesy; that is; students will not behave disrespectfully, although they do not have to feel

respect toward me. I believe that courtesy shows consideration for what other people think and feel. Therefore, I will expect all of my students to behave courteously toward me and their peers. The rule of courtesy will encompass most of my expectations for students in the classroom. For instance, the students will not interrupt while another student is speaking, they will not ask to go to the washroom or equivalent during instruction, and they will not express differing opinions in a condescending or rude way. These behaviors will ensure that everybody in the class feels heard, that the environment in the classroom is safe, and that each individual student feels valued in the learning process and environment. Another rule will be that students are expected to come to class prepared. Coming to class prepared puts a certain amount of responsibility on the students themselves. I will inform my students and ensure that they understand why they are expected to be prepared: students who have their equipment are more likely to engage in the learning process and will have minimal need to interrupt their own education in order to retrieve materials. A part of the rule to be prepared will be to have assignments completed and handed in on time, or if unable to complete the assignment, to discuss with the teacher a reasonable time frame for completion and assessment. Most important I believe that there needs to be an open conversation between the students and the teacher in order to create an environment of courtesy, comfort, and learning.

I believe that it is important to support students for good behavior rather than merely punish them for negative behavior. Because of this belief, I have planned a set of steps that will support student behavior in a positive way. My first step toward supportive feedback would be to thank students for appropriate behavior. This does not need to occur at all times, but rather should occur sporadically, but equally to all students. For instance, I would not always say “Thank-you, Joe, for listening while your fellow classmate spoke.” But occasionally, I would say

“I very much appreciate that you are listening and showing courtesy to your fellow classmates.” I may direct this statement toward the class as a whole, or I may individually identify a student who has improved or who is an exemplar for positive behavior. This kind of reinforcement relies heavily on the situation at hand. As a positive and supportive feedback for coming prepared to class, I will adopt a two day return policy on marked assignments. If students hand in their assignments on the day that the assignment is due, I will vow to have their assignments marked, with feedback if necessary, within two days. This shows that I am prepared and that I take pride in the students’ learning instead of merely expecting my students to take complete responsibility in their learning and not showing them the same courtesy. However, I will also specify that if the assignments are not handed in promptly, the assignments cannot be expected to be returned immediately either, because I have a responsibility to those students who have handed in their assignments to mark those assignments first. This works as both a positive reinforce and a negative reinforce, then, because students are rewarded for efficiency and punished for tardiness. Finally, I will respond to students’ questions and concerns immediately. It is important that students feel heard; when students feel important and understood, they are more likely to abide by the rules and participate in the open discussion between teacher and students.

Although I would prefer to act primarily on positive reinforcement, I understand that I will need to correct student behavior at some point. When that point comes, I intend to use respect toward both the student who is misbehaving and the other students in the classroom, while not making assumptions or premature conclusions. For instance, if a student is behaving discourteously toward his fellow classmate, I would require him to repeat what he said in a courteous manner. If he refuses to do so, I would repeat my request up to three times, and then ask him to step out of the classroom by giving him an ultimatum. For instance, I would say “You

have been asked three times to repeat what you said courteously. If you choose to not do so, you will be required to step out of the classroom.” By dealing with misbehavior in this way, it puts responsibility on the student: the student is expected to behave in a certain way or remove himself from the classroom. The choice is with the student rather than a dictatorial teacher. If students are required to become and remain responsible for their own actions and choices, they are going to make the decision that they see best fits themselves. At the same time, I, as the teacher, have given the student the maximum amount of choices and chances that I am prepared to give. Since the classroom is ultimately my space, and the students are visitors in my space, regardless of the fact that they should feel welcome and safe in the classroom, my rules will always be the final say. However, this method of dealing with misbehavior does not suggest that I do not care about the students, or that the students are merely my minions, but rather that the students behavior is not respectful or welcome in the learning space and will either be corrected or removed. Ultimately, the student has the choice of whether he will remain in the classroom or not, while I still have control over the class. If the student chose to step out of the classroom, I would continue teaching and deal with the student at my earliest convenience. When I had the chance to have a discussion with the student, I would do so in a non-confrontational way. For example, if the student were to refuse to repeat his statement politely, I would ask him: “Why did you refuse my request?” This gives the student a chance to explain himself before feeling as though I have judged him and the situation. Furthermore, the student will then be less likely to react defensively and assume that I have a personal vendetta against him. Ultimately, I would not like to be a dictator, but rather be a guide or facilitator for positive behavior.

For the misbehavior in my classroom, however, I intend to follow a hierarchy of discipline for consistency. My first step for discipline would be a non-verbal sign toward a

student, such as pointing to what they are being distracted by and giving them a stern look. If this does not curb the behavior, I would move to proximity control, which would involve me positioning myself next to the student who is misbehaving. This is likely to work, as students feel slightly uncomfortable when a teacher is standing particularly close to them. However, if the proximity control does not work, I would move on to verbal requests. For instance, if a student was texting during instruction, I would ask him to put his cell phone away during instruction. I would likely use verbal requests three times before moving to the next step of the hierarchy. My fourth step of the hierarchy would be either removing the students' distraction, if it were a physical object such as a cell phone, or asking the student to move desks to diminish distraction. If the misbehavior was a verbal insult, or the like, I would ask the student to repeat the comment in a considerate and polite way, or if unable to apologize for the comment. The fifth step in my hierarchy would be to ask the student to leave the room and wait for me where I would then deal with the situation in a private manner. If this does not work, I will bring in reinforcements, possibly in the form of a referral to the office. However, this last step depends on the severity of the problem, and I hope that I will never be in need of using such means. In the case of persistent behavioral problems, I will still use these steps, but may do so in a different manner. For instance, if a student does not raise their hand and is consistently interrupting the class, I would likely ignore the students' behavior and openly praise other students for behaving in the accepted manner. Although this may be perceived as passive-aggressive, it reinforces the positive behavior while "inadvertently" disciplining the student who is behaving inappropriately. I would also keep records of the behavioral issues so that I had records if an issue were to ever arise outside of my classroom, or a situation were to escalate to the point of aggression inside my classroom.

In order to ensure that my students understand and know my rules, I will involve them in the writing process. Older students, especially, have a desire to be in control of their own environment, and therefore can be easily guided toward a set of rules that they feel are part of their desires for a healthy learning environment. Ultimately, the teacher is in control, but it is not difficult to guide students toward the rules they feel they have created. Furthermore, I would write those rules on the board so that they could be easily referred to when need be. The written rules remind students constantly of what is expected of them in the classroom, putting them in a position of responsibility over their own behavior. In addition, I would have the expectations for behavior during specific activities, such as group work, individual seat work, and tests, posted at various places around the classroom, such as on bulletin boards or the front board. This allows for students and me, as the teacher, to have easy access to the specific rules and expected behaviors. If students are always exposed to the rules and in a position where they feel they have contributed to the creation of the rules, they have no excuse to not know the rules, and there is little teaching requirement on the part of the teacher.

My personal management plan relies heavily on student involvement. I believe that students learn best when they are in control and feel safe. I also believe that students need to feel like the teachers they have care about them. Therefore, my management plan revolves around the idea that students need to be an integral part of decision making. I personally believe that students need to show courtesy to their teachers rather than respect because respect is earned. However, I also believe that respect can be earned quickly, and that the referent power base will be the power base I primarily operate on because it shows unwavering respect and support for the teacher, the learning environment, and all of the students in the class. Students need to be treated like they are emerging adults, not like they are miniscule children. High school

classrooms are much different than elementary classrooms, and my personal management plan reflects the belief that I will be an effective high school teacher. Discipline needs to be an open conversation. Sometimes we as teachers look at students and do not see individuals, but we need to treat students like they are individuals and that they have their own ideas, motivations, and reasoning for behaving the way they do. Our personal management plans need to reflect that individuality, and I feel that mine does. Students need to be taught, not punished.