

Running Head: BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Behavior Management and Discipline Plan

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Research has found that there is a cumulative effect on student achievement of at least two years from teachers' effectiveness (Sanders & Rivers, 2006). One important part of being an effective teacher is implementing classroom management strategies "so that learning can occur," not for "achieving order for order's sake" (Weinstein & Mignano, 2007, p. 6). This quote supports the main idea in my teaching philosophy that the classroom should lay the foundation for a community of learners. A community of learners can only be established through a classroom environment management plan that creates a positive, welcoming, and safe atmosphere conducive to learning. The following behavior management and discipline plan focuses on creating a productive learning atmosphere for all members of the classroom's community of learners. Overarching themes that are considered are arranging the classroom, establishing routines and procedures, organizing and managing instruction, and dealing with student behavior.

Classroom Arrangement

The set up of the classroom sets a tone for the school year. When students first enter the classroom, I want students to feel safe, comfortable, and welcomed. I also want students to take ownership in the classroom.

Setting up the Classroom

The classroom will be arranged in a manner that makes it easy to transition from independent to group work. The desks will be organized to minimize talking during lecture and direct instruction but maximized for cooperative learning after a slight readjustments of the desks. The desks are arranged in diagonal rows with a wide center aisle in the center. Clusters of four desks are easily made by rotating the desks with little effort.

Before the students enter the classroom on the first day, I will decorate the classroom in hopes that students want to enter the classroom each day. I will post age-appropriate posters of content that will be covered during the year, but perhaps more importantly, I will have belongings in the classroom that are personal to me. For instance, I will display personal pictures of family and friends on my desk and knick-knacks from the colleges I have attended. I will be careful not to overdue the personalization of the room because I want students to think of the classroom in terms of "our classroom" rather than "Miss Goode's classroom." I will keep my personal items in my personal space and will expect the students to respect my space as they respect their own and their peers' spaces. Also, I will have materials clearly labeled and located in convenient places to limit disruptions. Areas in the classroom will be devoted to the class library, learning center, writing center, and inquiry center. Many locations will have soft surfaces, including curtains on windows, fabric on bulletin boards, bean bags in the class library, and individual carpet squares for reading workshop.

Even with these decisions that are made about classroom setup before meeting the students, it is important that students have a voice in the set up of the class. When establishing rules and responses to behavior, I will listen to student input and we will decide as a group what the best decisions are for our needs during the school year. Do we want to have a class pet or bring in nature through plants? This is a decision that can be jointly made as a class.

Students with Special Needs

When arranging the classroom, I will set up the classroom so it is accessible for *all* members of the learning community: students, faculty, parents, etc. For physical handicaps that may confine a student to a wheelchair, I will make sure there are wide aisles that make it easier for the child to navigate his or her way around the room. I will place students with visual disabilities close to the board as well as provide these students with enlarged copies of materials when appropriate. In addition, I will ensure that students have a place to “cool-off” when needed. However, it is important that even with this “cool-off” area, the layout of the classroom allows me to have eye contact with all students at all times. I will be sure to pay careful attention to the location of these students in the classroom so the distractibility is minimized and attention is maximized. Some students may perform best when in close proximity of the teacher’s desk, while others perform best in the second row off to the side, and others need to have more space around their desk than others. It is important to pay attention to and meet the needs of the students.

Safe and Caring Environment

A safe and caring classroom welcomes all students into a place where they feel secure in their physical and psychological needs. I will provide this sanctuary or retreat for students by promoting tolerance among the community of learners. I will get to know each student as an individual so I can better provide for their needs. For instance, if I have a homeless student in the classroom, I may offer to wash the students’ clothes so she can wear clean clothes at school. I may also have breakfast or snacks available for students who cannot eat at home.

A second way to provide this safe and caring environment is to set boundaries for the students. Students will test teachers to see how far the boundaries and rules can be stretched. When students understand that the boundaries are firmly in place, the students will gain respect and feel safe.

The first weeks of school will be dedicated to establishing the tolerant atmosphere and routines and procedures by role playing, modeling, teaching, and giving examples and non-examples of appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

Routines and Procedures

Routines and procedures can be used to continue the positive tone set by the classroom arrangement. The classroom routines and procedures should be adapted to fit the needs of all students and help each member of the learning community feel safe and comfortable in the classroom.

Routines

Routines are important for all students in the classroom, but most importantly, students with special needs will depend on classroom routines. Fortunately, I also thrive on routines so I will be sure to setup and keep classroom routines.

One routine that will be established is the daily schedule. Depending on the age of the students, I plan to have a daily letter written to the students each day. This letter will explain any upcoming changes in the daily routine, what is on the agenda for the day, and what immediate tasks need to be completed in the morning (agendas, homework, morning work, etc.). The daily letter may be given in multiple forms to provide for individual needs; for instance, a struggling reader may receive a copy of the letter with visual aids to help him follow along when reading.

There have been many times that I have been confused as to whether I am supposed to raise my hand to respond or the teacher wants a freely flowing discussion. In order to prevent this confusion with the students, I will use a system that is displayed on the board. If the magnet displaying raised hands is up, I want students to raise hands for the lesson. But if the magnet with talking mouths and ears is on the board, then the students know that it is a lesson where I welcome freely flowing discussion. Of course, this will only be used after students demonstrate the ability to take turns talking and listening to other ideas.

To prevent the disruption of instruction from questions such as “I really have to go to the bathroom,” I will build in bathroom breaks in the daily schedule so they become a routine in the class. For emergencies, I will implement hand-signals that I have seen in action in a fourth grade classroom at Norge Elementary. If students hold up one finger and I nod in acknowledgement, the student has permission to be excused to the restroom. If students flash me two fingers and I acknowledge the student, I know being excused is an emergency and the student needs to be excused immediately. This routine will stay in place until students break the trust. If an individual abuses the system by leaving too frequently or is caught roaming the halls rather than going to the bathroom, the student will only be allowed to go to the restroom during the built in daily bathroom breaks.

Transitions

Transitions are an inevitable part of the school day in elementary, middle, and high school. When transitioning in and out of the classroom and between subjects, it is important to minimize disruptions in order to maximize instructional time. There are tricks and techniques I will implement to help with transitions.

First, I will be conscious of the time (Weinstein & Mignano, 2007) and verbally warn students when transitions are approaching. For example, I may say, “You have two minutes before we will start getting ready for P.E.” This also helps bring clear beginnings and ends to lessons for students.

Secondly, I will prepare for transitioning back into the classroom before ever leaving the classroom. I can do this by having students take out the appropriate materials that are needed for the next lesson before leaving their seats.

When students are entering the classroom or switching between subjects, I will give directions for what students are to do. I will use a timer that gives students one minute to complete the directions. While I will take special care to only give one clear direction, when it is necessary to give multiple directions, I will be sure to list the order of the directions on the board so students

can refer back to them. The students will know that when the timer finishes beeping, they should be waiting to hear what the next instruction is. In a sense, this is an individual classroom bell system.

Managing Classroom Services

In order to prevent disruptions from students being pulled out from the classroom and aside in the classroom, I will attempt to place students in seats that are located near the door or near where the services will convene. I will also be sure that students are aware of the expectations for this transition. I will expect students to have materials for the services ready and promptly leave the room quietly when it is time to receive services. I do not expect to have to come over to the student's desk and help the student dig through materials while wasting instructional time.

To keep myself organized and ensure that I am effectively planning the time to best meet the needs of students being pulled-out for services, I will use a services calendar to visually represent what material should be covered when the student is out of the room. This will also help me provide assistance when the student needs to make-up missed work, and keep me informed of where all students are at any time.

Preventing Downtime

Many strategies can be implemented to prevent downtime, such as SOL review index cards or games, learning centers, and silent reading. While I will use these in the classroom, I also feel that students should be able to use resources at school to discover about topics that interest them. Therefore, there will be on-going, not graded inquiry projects for the children. This serves to increase their interest in topics that may or may not be covered in the standards. Each student will pick three topics that they are interested in at the beginning of the year. They will then have the ability to research these topics during what would potentially be downtime. For example, they may have copies of encyclopedia articles in their desk to look through when work is completed. When students have at least five points about the topic and feel prepared to present to the class, the students will teach their classmates and me about the topic. The presentation can be given using any available technology such as a video or radio show. Students will be required to present at least once before the end of the year, but are encouraged to research as many topics as they would like.

Homework

Homework will always be used to reinforce objectives and skills learned in class. The homework will be given as a formative assessment to help students learn. There will be levels of completion given for homework: completed, at least 75% completed, at least 50% completed, and incomplete (less than 50% completed). Students will receive a "check-plus" for completed homework, a "check" for 75% completed, a "check-minus" for 50% completed, and a zero for incomplete homework. The majority of the time homework will be checked first part of class (in the morning for elementary students or at the beginning of the period for older students). I will walk by with a clipboard and monitor the completion of the homework. Occasionally, homework assignments will be collected for a number/letter grade. Students will be aware of

these *graded* assignments in advance, but will also be aware that I reserve the right to collect any assignment to grade in this manner at any time.

I will give students choices for homework when appropriate in order to increase completion rates. For instance, if students are supposed to review vocabulary words, they may have the option of writing sentences with the words or drawing pictures to represent the words. In math, if students are supposed to study multiplication facts, they may have the option to recite and write the facts or recite and draw a picture to represent the facts. Students may even have the option of “checking-out” manipulatives to make models showing the multiplication sentences. One other method to increase completion rates on homework is to give a scoop of popcorn kernels for 100% class completion (see more below in *Motivating Students*).

Organizing and Managing Instruction

Once the classroom is filled with students and routines and procedures are learned, the next step to a productive learning environment is to organize and manage instruction.

Motivating Students

A powerful way to motivate students to learn is to engage them in the curriculum. Many times students need assistance in finding the connections between the content in the curriculum and the real world. One way I hope to build the bridge between what is happening in the classroom and the real world is through the integration of technology. The generation of students in schools today is technology savvy; for many students, using technology is second nature. It is a tool that can and should be used to update what may seem to the students as outdated material without a purpose.

While I want all of my students to be intrinsically motivated to learn and carry this motivation throughout life to become a lifelong learner, realistically, all humans are motivated through extrinsic rewards (pay checks, grades, etc.). Even lifelong learners may prefer to spend time learning about one subject rather than learning about multiple subjects. In order to increase motivation for students, I will use a dependent group contingency plan where either all or no students receive a reward for staying on-task. Research of Heering and Wilder (2006) found that students' on-task behavior almost doubled when dependent group contingencies were implemented. To incorporate this research in the classroom, I will explain to students what on-task behavior looks and does not look like and sounds and does not sound like. As a class, we will develop a list of appropriate and feasible rewards that can be earned with on-task behavior. Examples of rewards include pencils, stickers, homework passes, lunch with the teacher, an extra scoop of popcorn kernels (see below), and extra preferred activity time on Friday afternoon. Rewards are selected at random from a drawing. When first implementing the plan, I will use it for one or two subjects daily and frequently give out earned rewards. Overtime, I will limit the frequency of the rewards given.

One of the potential rewards for the group contingency plan is an extra scoop of popcorn kernels. This is another technique I will implement to motivate students. The students will earn a popcorn

party, to be given during in-class lunch or preferred activity time, when enough popcorn kernels are transferred from the large container to fill a smaller container. Students can earn a scoop of kernels for miscellaneous factors such as all students completing homework, following the rules in the hallway (hands to self, quiet), and receiving good reports from resource teachers.

An individual reward system will be established through the “Caught Being Good” board. Students names/pictures will be added to the board when they are “caught being good” when the majority of the class is off-task. At the end of each week, the students who are on the board will be entered in a drawing for a reward. Their name is entered as many times as it is on the board. I will keep track of winners in order to do my best to ensure that all students have a chance to win. If certain students feel like they never have a chance to receive the reward, this strategy will lose its effect on those particular students.

Grouping Students

Another way to motivate students to learn is through cooperative learning. There are many instructional times that grouping students contribute greatly to student learning by being able to focus on the students’ needs: guided reading, small math groups, writing workshop. It may even prove beneficial to group students for projects, such as designing a science experiment, so they can bounce ideas off of each other. As a teacher, it is my responsibility to ensure that cooperative learning serves its purpose to support student learning. One way to ensure this goal is to determine whether groups should be heterogeneously or homogeneously based on ability levels for the activity. This will be monitored for instructional activities by controlling group dynamics through teacher selected groups rather than having students choose partners. An additional way to ensure all students are involved in the learning process and held accountable for group work is to assign jobs for each individual member (Weinstein & Mignano, 2007). Examples of possible jobs include materials manager, communications specialist, and time keeper. Another strategy I will use to ensure the goals of group work are achieved is by teaching students how to work in a group and cooperate with others. I will do this through role playing and by gradually introducing group work by giving an independent assignment that requires coming together in a small group to complete the last step.

It is important to consider the content of the group work before choosing how to group students. For example, Brown and Morris (2005) found that grouping by low and high ability in spelling closed the achievement gap between the ability groups. However, flexible grouping must be used in the classroom to prevent any negative stigmas that could result from being placed in a low ability group. I will use homogenous ability groups to focus on students’ needs when struggling with a particular math concept or a reading strategy, but I will aim to use more heterogeneous ability grouping to strengthen both the academic and social skills of all students.

Dealing with Student Behavior

Lastly, it is important to develop a clear sense of how to deal with student behavior, which includes understanding a personal theory of discipline and determining how to create and enforce classroom rules.

Theory of Discipline

Overall, I am an internationalist when it comes to my theory of discipline as I fall in the middle of the teacher control continuum; however, I pull ideas from both the low and high ends of the continuum as well. I believe that generally students should have a voice in the creation of class rules in order to increase the likelihood that the rules will be followed. I agree with Dreikers in the Logical Consequences model that behavior is, for the most part, a choice that students make, and the first step to changing the behavior is to understand the goal of the misbehavior (Burden, 2003). I think it is important for natural and logical consequences to follow misbehaviors when positive reinforcement is not an option.

From the low end of the continuum, I believe that students should be responsible for their behavior. I also agree with the concept that teachers should work to build relationships with students to improve classroom management. One way to build these relationships is by avoiding labeling the student by taking care to separate the student from the misbehavior, an important concept of Ginott's Congruent Communication model (Burden, 2003). When managing a class, it is important to take into consideration the factors that go into behavior, including the teacher's influence as well as group dynamics (Burden, 2003).

On the other hand, there are times when individual students may need more teacher input to shape behavior through reinforcement, especially in the case of students with disabilities (i.e. students with the inability to stay focused due to ADHD or TBI). It is at these times that I pull discipline strategies from the high end of the teacher control continuum. This is when I adopt the philosophy of shaping behavior through reinforcement in Skinner's Behavior Modification model (Burden, 2003). I have seen the importance of frequently changing the reinforcers to keep students motivated in the plan. One important approach I use with the entire class is the "catch students being good" approach in order to reinforce positive behaviors while ignoring the misbehaviors when appropriate.

Rules

As mentioned earlier, I believe in the power of jointly defining classroom rules. This helps create a safe, warm, and accepting environment by allowing the students to take part in the process of developing classroom rules. To prevent misbehavior, I will set up a positive reinforcement system that encourages students to behave rather than punishing students when they misbehave. When students are brainstorming a list of rules, we will discuss what makes a good rule. One criterion is positively stated rules. Our classroom rules will be stated as what behavior should be occurring rather than what should not be occurring. Examples of rules that I would like to include in the classroom are:

1. Be prepared.
2. Be respectful.
3. Ask, ask, ask questions!

These rules are broad enough to encompass appropriate behavior for all types of working situations but not too broad to where they are unclear. In addition to positively stated rules, there are not too many rules that the students are unable to remember them.

Managing Misbehaviors

In the ideal situation, all learners would be intrinsically motivated to gain knowledge and there would be no disruptions and misbehaviors to break the act of learning. An effective classroom manager finds ways to deal with these small disruptions in a manner that keeps the classroom running smoothly. There are times when positive reinforcement is the answer, and other more serious times, consequences are needed. It is important to be a consistent classroom manager. While there should be a general consistent classroom guideline for actions to misbehaviors, teachers must understand that every student is unique and differentiation can even be applied to the classroom management. One way to do this is by allowing students to choose two individual rules that they must follow in addition to the class rules (Whitehead, 2009).

It is mandatory that students understand expectations and are clear on what behaviors are acceptable and what behaviors result in consequences. This should be addressed before implementing the classroom management/behavioral interventions. I will discuss responses to the four categories of misbehaviors: minor, more serious, chronic, and “thorny.”

(1) Minor Misbehaviors

In the classroom, I will use positive reinforcement as the first step to handling minor misbehaviors like noisiness, socializing, or daydreaming. For example, to send the off-task students an indirect message, I will say, “I like the way that Charlie is following directions.” Another strategy I will use to send positive messages to students is a “Caught Being Good” board (more in *Motivating Students*).

Even with the use of positive reinforcement, there will be misbehaviors that require further interventions. This is where I will implement consequences. The students will receive two warnings a day before the first consequence is given. This consequence will be determined by the age of the students. An example of one may be the removal of the student’s name from the “Caught Being Good” board (though this could be risky for the frequent misbehavers). If the misbehavior continues and a second consequence is needed, the consequence will be stronger (i.e. partial loss of “preferred activity time” on Friday afternoon when the student must write an apology for his or her misbehavior before returning to the free time). If a third consequence is needed in a single day, the parents are contacted in the chosen form of communication requested by the family and a written apology must be given by the student. It is important to note that a severe misbehavior (see below) may move straight to this consequence.

There will be a theme for the classroom that is continued in the behavior/discipline plan. Depending on the age of the students, possible themes include a baseball theme with “3 strikes, you’re out!” or a traffic signal theme.

(2) More serious misbehaviors

Positive reinforcement will not be used for these more serious behaviors such as arguing and failing to respond to a group directive, as consequences will be implemented immediately.

However, these more serious behaviors will have levels in order to consistently apply consequences. For instance, in the case of arguing, there will be three levels:

1. Verbally arguing with classmate or teacher in reasonable manner (expressed disagreement).
2. Loud verbal argument with classmate or teacher in uncontrollable, non-restrainable manner.
3. Verbally arguing with classmate or teacher with physical contact.

At the first level, the consequence will be given that the two parties involved must resolve their difference with a third party intervention at a convenient time (immediately if not reinforcing the behavior which can be determined with a Functional Behavioral Assessment) and the arguing students will not be eligible for the weekly “Caught Being Good” drawing. At the second level, the first level consequences apply as well as the added consequence of automatic notification of parents and a session with the guidance counselor. At the third level, school protocol is added as many schools have a zero-tolerance policy for violence. At all times, the students will be given a brief “cool-off” period after the argument (except in the case when it reinforces the misbehavior). It is important to remember each student’s temperament when interacting with students after these situations.

(3) *Chronic misbehavior.*

If a student is chronically misbehaving, data should be collected in order to effectively set up and track the success of an intervention. The first step of the intervention will be to find an individualized intervention to fit the behavior. This will involve conferencing with the student to determine if he/she understands the behavior and the reason it is a disruption. A plan will then be developed to help monitor the behavior. This may begin with a teacher monitoring checklist as well as a self-monitored checklist. There are multiple ways to implement individualized behavioral interventions. I will be sure to make it individualized by working with the student and parents to find motivating rewards through an interest inventory. Individualized interventions will continue to be altered until a fit is found.

It will be important to stay in contact with the parents at this point. Also, if the behavior does not show improvement, the student may be entered into child study to brainstorm causes and solutions for the behavior. Perhaps one intervention determined in child study would be to visit guidance to try to understand why the behavior is occurring.

(4) *“Thorny Problems”*

It will be important to follow school guidelines for “thorny problems” such as cheating and stealing. While it is important to deal with misbehaviors in the classroom, these behaviors will also have to follow school protocol. Classroom protocol on top of school protocol will be as follows for these *unacceptable* misbehaviors (cheating, stealing, profanity, etc.): automatic contact with parents, no chance of “caught being good” reward for the week, and a sincere letter of apology to all affected parties.

I will take many steps to prevent cheating in the classroom. The first step will be to use privacy folders when students are taking quizzes or tests. Also, I will stress that I am more interested in what the student has learned rather than the grade because I will better know how to provide help for students. Finally, I will give back assignments with only written feedback on them at first before recollecting the assignments and redistributing with the grades. This is to help stress the importance of the feedback versus the grade.

Tattling is a tricky behavior to handle because it can become “he said, she said” very quickly, but there are times when a teacher must be informed. One way I will handle tattling in the classroom, especially at ages where tattling is at its peak, is to role play situations so students understand that I need to be told in safety matters but not the trivial situations such as a student not following directions. I will teach students to ask themselves certain questions like, “Does Miss Goode need to know x, y, or z in order to keep my classmates and myself safe?” This strategy can be taken further by providing students a checklist when they tattle that they must complete before coming back and re-telling me, which they can do only if the checklist warrants the re-telling. Consequences will not be implemented in the case of tattling because it is not, in my opinion, a misbehavior as much as developmental stage that must be outgrown through explanation, modeling, and understanding.

Preventing Violence

The first step in preventing violence is to build a welcoming community where all students feel accepted and safe. Beyond this measure, one way I will look to prevent school violence is by being aware of early warning signs (Weinstein & Mignano, 2007). This includes watching students’ actions and reactions to situations. For example, if a student is always eating lunch alone because of fear of persecution for the way he or she dresses or his/her intelligence, I will keep a close eye on the student and try to work with the community to promote tolerance for all students. It will be important in this situation to make sure the individual student has an outlet to express his emotions if desired.

Another important strategy that will work to prevent violence and help students effectively deal with conflict throughout life is by teaching conflict resolution skills and social-emotional skills. Role playing in the classroom at the beginning of the year when routines and the environment is being created will allow students a chance to experiment with different strategies to handle conflict.

Finally, because training to be a teacher only goes so far into the psychology of students, I will ask for help from guidance and other trained professionals when I feel there is a serious situation that may lead to violence. It is critical to report any threats or other signs of potential violence to other colleagues and administration; there should be open communication with other colleagues in the school and help students understand that all adults are ultimately in the school to help students with all types of situations.

Responding to Violence

Even with the best prevention techniques, there will be times when responding to violence is necessary. It is critical in these situations to control my emotions in order to prevent the escalation of the situation. While I may want to break up physical fights to protect the students from bodily harm, I must train myself to stay calm and call for help while at the same time keeping students that are not involved in the situation out of harms way by removing them from the scene.

After the violent situation has dissolved, it is important to debrief the students in order to help all students cope with their feelings. Depending on the situation, some students may need to speak with the school counselor.

Positive Reinforcement

Research finds that positive reinforcement is a more effective approach to classroom discipline than punishment and consequences (Weinstein & Mignano, 2007). I will ensure that I base my classroom management on a positive reinforcement approach by focusing on good behavior over misbehavior. Ideas explained above such as the “Caught Being Good” board and the class popcorn kernel containers are ways to focus attention on good behavior. I will use reinforcing phrases such as, “I like the way that Charlie is ready with his book open to page 21 and his eyes are on me,” to help other students realize the behavior they should be exhibiting.

In addition to the empirical evidence, I have had the opportunity to view many classrooms that support the findings of positive reinforcement. For example, I have seen students continually misbehave in a classroom where the attention is focused on calling out the misbehaviors and there is no reward for good behavior. However, there is an immediate difference when walking into a classroom where good behavior is reinforced. I have witnessed more students’ on-task as well as a shift in the atmosphere of the learning environment. It is as if the positive reinforcement strategies contribute to student learning by making the classroom an inviting place rather than the negative tone established in a class where students are criticized and called out for misbehaving.

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