

# MY PHILOSOPHY OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

## Mr. Spiegel's Classroom.

Effective teachers are made not born. The implementation of an appropriate and well thought out classroom management plan is the lifeline of any teacher looking to be effective and make a difference. Teachers have an enormous responsibility and opportunity to foster a learning environment that is safe, fun, cooperative and relational. The only way to achieve success in this quest for transformation and empowerment is a classroom management plan that is based on research and rather than reinventing the toaster, it is always evolving to meet the ever changing culture of adolescents and to reflect the knowledge gained through experience within the classroom. The classroom management plan is the cornerstone for success. I believe that the classroom is a place where learning happens when students and teachers work together.

I believe that the teacher has an important role in being responsible for creating a classroom culture that is energetic, positive, relational and safe. The teacher is also in charge of communicating the rules, procedures and expectations that will stay consistent throughout the year; clarity and consistency are keys in this process. The teacher is steering the ship and should act as a role model for her students in terms of respect, behavior, love, effort and maturity; the teacher must display the characteristics that are expected of the students. I believe that all students are capable of learning. It is the challenge and calling of the teacher to present a classroom environment where learning for every student is possible; this includes safety, equality, comfort, routines and a personal approach to each student. Communication is the most powerful tool that exists between the student and teacher and should be worked on and honed in order to strengthen and develop its use most effectively. Finally I believe the classroom should reflect the students who learn within its walls. Therefore the creation of the ideal environment should be shared and power to envision the "dream" classroom should fall in the hands of the students. Walls will jump with color and praise of students while the tone will be inviting.

Robert Marzano has concluded, from his research, "***Of all the variables, classroom management had the largest effect on student achievement.***" He goes on to state "This makes intuitive sense—students cannot learn in a chaotic, poorly managed classroom." I could not agree more with Marzano and the research's conclusions.

## ME AS A TEACHER

As a teacher, I am seen as a role model to my students. While this is a daunting position, the excitement of empowering positive change energizes me. In spending the last ten years coaching, I understand that students and players are impressionable. They will watch, emulate, evaluate, copy, replicate and desire to be like the person you are to them. In lieu of this fact, consistency of character as well as allowing the students to see me as a person is key to creating a teacher worth following. I understand there is a division between student and teacher because I have seen the ill affects of teachers trying to be friends first with their students. Love can come in the form of discipline, critique and confrontation as well as from high fives, words of praise and bragging of progress. I am my biggest and harshest critic and expect myself to do the following things consistently day in and day out:

- I will treat you with respect.
- I will be prepared.
- I will try my best.
- I will admit when I make a mistake.
- I will smile. A lot.

- I will choose to be joyful and positive.

## **STUDENTS AS STUDENTS**

Students are naturally inquisitive and intrinsically motivated. I am convinced that all students have a huge capacity for learning yet the presence of multiple intelligences (as put forth by Howard Gardener) creates a challenge for students to connect with the content delivered in particular ways. Students are in need of personal attention and crave to be known. They are willing to work and risk as long as they know you care. Students are relational and need to be given the time and opportunity to seek out meaningful relationships with their peers as well as adults present in the school. Like John Dewey, I believe students learn from experience. This includes real life connections, field trips, project based instruction and getting their hands dirty. For a student, learning is never over. Students need to be challenged to think creatively as well as to be confronted with abstract and universal themes such as empathy and loyalty, which ties directly into the emotional and social, needs typical of their ages. Students are constantly surrounded by stimulation and therefore boring content, direction and activities are now more than ever hindrances to motivation. The classroom management should have the student at its center; the balance of ownership as well as motivation behind every strategy should be done with the student on the forefront of the mind.

### *Expectations of students:*

I expect my students to be respectful of me, themselves, their classmates and the items and tools they use. I expect my students to give their best effort on everything we do. I expect my students to learn from their mistakes. I expect my students to participate and learn to respond rather than react. I expect my students to be themselves, to risk, to always attempt and to show up ready for anything. The Golden Rule will craft a lot of peer-to-peer interaction and I expect my students to try to follow it. I expect my students to have fun and discover something new about themselves. I expect to learn from my students. I expect my students to dare to be greater than they are.

## **RULES**

It is very important to establish basic rules that will govern the classroom throughout the year. The rules should be communicated on the first day of school and clearly displayed on the walls of the classroom. I believe clear and concise rules will establish a platform for behavior as well as enforcement.

1. Respect everyone around you.
2. Raise your hand if you have any questions.
3. Listen and pay attention when someone is speaking.
4. Listen and follow instructions.
5. Love your neighbor as you love yourself.

The rules are set up to create a safe and positive environment and should be referred back to often until all rules are known by heart. The research mentioned in *Managing the Middle School Classroom* shows that consistently enforcing the rules results in fewer behavioral problems. The rules are guidance on how to properly act not threats on how not to act. Though I agree with a lot of Robert DiGiulio's theories, his assertion that classroom's should operate without rules is backed by research. Marzano states "research and theory support the notion that well-articulated rules and procedures that are negotiated with the students are a critical aspect of classroom management, affecting not only behavior but also their academic achievement as well." Rules should be established with the cooperation of the students and each rule should be explained in terms of reasoning.

## **OUR CLASSROOM**

The students will have ownership of the classroom and it is my hope that they will aid me in creating an encouraging and inviting environment. The students' input is critical in developing the safest and most comfortable place for ALL students to learn effectively. I will remain flexible on establishing the environment and will take all student suggestions and implement them as best I can. The community of learners is not limited to how we treat each other but constructing the particulars of how the classroom looks and feels. The book *Ways We Want Our Class To Be* suggests periodic class meetings in which the classroom as a whole is reviewed to see if "this is the way we want our class to be." I believe this will create ownership and purpose within the students and will be a positive force that unites them together as friends and learners. Being apart of something bigger than them is important for students to feel and allowing students to brainstorm and create a list of classroom characteristics (early on in the semester) will empower them to respect their own decisions while tying them together with the content being taught within. It is my hope that all students feel apart of the class and the classroom.

### ***Expectations of classroom climate:***

A classroom atmosphere that is both encouraging and stimulating, that develops a safe learning climate. The climate will also supports thought, foster creativity; encourage dreamers and exploration questions while inspiring more to be asked. Failure will be familiar and therefore risk will be a staple. The positive and energetic culture of the classroom is going to be of the utmost importance. The classroom will serve as the pulse of the class.

## **CLASSROOM PROCEDURES**

### **HOMework**

The students will be given the homework procedures in a handout on the first day of class. If a web page is available for classroom assistance, these procedures will be posted there as well. I want to communicate clearly what is expected as well as develop a familiarity and routine with expectations.

1. All homework must be turned in the day it is due to receive full credit.
2. Copying any homework that is not a group assignment will result in a zero on the assignment and a parent teacher conference.
3. Students may turn in homework one day late for partial credit.
4. Name and date must be clearly labeled on the top right corner.

Homework is a crucial part of the learning process yet can be seen as meaningless and labeled as "busy work." Homework assignments will only be given with specific educational purposes and the nature of them will be meaningful in amount and difficulty. Homework is an aide to learning in the classroom and therefore a failure to do the homework will leave the student unprepared to participate in class as well as behind in learning the content. Homework will always be graded. They will assess themselves out of ten on effort and achievement and this will play into the final grade I assign them. All homework assignments will be discussed or at least referenced within classroom instruction so students understand their time spent on the assignment was meaningful and appreciated. The assignment will be listed on the board and discussed each class and students will be encouraged to write down the specifics in their planners. Students who are absent are responsible for seeking out classmates or the teacher to find out what was missed. This teaches initiative and responsibility. Although Kohn believes students should be graded solely on what they know not if and when they turn it in, I believe caring about and taking responsibility for homework relates to real world lessons encountered in the work place.

### ***Routines and procedures (passing out papers; handing out homework, etc)***

We will establish familiar routines and traditions that allow the students to be comfortable with what is coming next and will have a shared ownership in the transitions between activities. These

will be established very early in the semester and though flexibility is key in any effective classroom, these routines will be honored and consistent. Students will be expected to bring their pens, books and journals (p.b.j.'s) everyday for class. An attention signal we will use may be a word of the class's choosing that I will say aloud and they will repeat if they can hear me. "Pumpkins....pumpkins....pumpkins..." This will be a lighthearted way to get the classes attention while giving the students some power of choice and ownership. I hope to create an inquisitive environment and students will be expected to raise their hands if they have questions or answers during our discussion. This will be an attempt to teach showing respect to classmates and teachers. I understand schools have handbooks about hallway passes and I will follow the school's established rules. I refuse to treat students like animals and therefore bathroom passes will be allowed during my class as long as they bring their book up to get signed out. I want the classroom to be familiar to the students and therefore each class will have a folder that they turn homework into and certain spots for storage. I want to try and get the most out of every class and therefore we will learn and interact until the bell rings. I will not allow my students to pack up early unless I give them permission to. These are all little ways that I will establish a safe and studious classroom with as little chaos as possible.

### **Theorists.**

**Richard R Powell** and his book *Classroom Management, Perspectives on the Social Curriculum*

Powell states that classroom management begins as "controlling and disciplining your students and then with experience it grows into including making the most out of your time allotted for each class, available resources and student potential." He also understands the importance of being diverse and culturally aware. Student diversity is about understanding culture and backgrounds in order to understand them as students. He encourages teachers to "move beyond conventional instructional management and explore alternative strategies, be flexible, be open and be aware of the dominant learning culture and whether it is equal for all."

### **John Dewey:**

Simply put, students learn by doing and the classroom should have the student as the center!

### **Robert DiGiulio**

DiGiulio encourages teachers to "take charge of what we can change (it) does work, and it works spectacularly." He understands that "student learning and achievement are at stake" and we should be "attempting to create the best situation in which the student can learn and teacher can teach." A classroom "must promote students' healthy social and emotional development in a secure environment." DiGiulio focuses on prosocial behavior, which I like but thinks rules are not necessary which I disagree with.

### **Robert Marzano:**

The research shows that the follow factors in classroom management have a positive effect size:

\*Design and Implementation of Rules and procedures... -.763 average effect size.

\*Disciplinary Interventions -.909 average effect size

\*Teacher-student relationship -.869 average effect size

\*Mental set -1.294 average effect size

I align myself with Marzano's trust in the research as well as his finding about the importance of classroom management, in terms of teacher effectiveness. His book *Classroom Management that Works* is referenced and contributes to a lot of my beliefs for effective management.

## **Instructional and Assessment Strategies that Promote your Management Goals**

### ***What do you do instructionally to meet student's academic needs?...Preventing students' need to act out?***

Mr. Brewer, a middle school teacher I observed, told me "the best classroom management strategy is delivering an engaging and exciting lesson." Students who are engaged and successful rarely act out and therefore instruction and content should play a major role in an effective classroom management plan. Lesson plans will be key in succeeding in this area of the plan. By always coming prepared to class, I will ensure that the lesson has been well thought out and that content is understood by me, the one who is teaching it. Preparation is paramount. After the preparation, the use of multiple instruction methods will keep the lessons fresh and continue to engage the students without fear of familiarity causing boredom. Direct instruction is a great tool but should be used in balance with problem base learning projects and hands on activities that get the students out of their seats, into groups and maybe even out of the classroom. All instruction methods should be student centered and should keep in mind that students' value learning that is relative and meaningful. Therefore lessons should tie in the big picture as well as real life scenarios.

Standards should steer curriculum in order to make sure the content is appropriate and on point. Reflection, in terms of standards as well as effectiveness (student engagement and student success), should become a routine for effective teachers.

### ***How does your assessment promote the goals of your management?***

Assessment is tricky to me. Everywhere I read and observe, promotes a different style or technique in terms of assessing a student's progress with content and behavioral goals. Therefore I believe the presence of many forms of assessment is key to keeping progress in check. Feedback presented, both negative and positive, in the form of calls home to parents, verbal communication and grades are all factors that transmit and promote the goals of the classroom. Whether these goals are social ones or content specific, Marzano agrees that feedback from the teacher (and this feedback being communicated clearly) is paramount.

### ***How do you allow for variable styles, cultures and circumstances in meeting the diverse needs of your students?***

A constantly changing and naturally evolving classroom management plan would be the cornerstone of my philosophy, with the central question being "what do these students need and how can I meet those needs." This type of approach would ensure that I would respond to the diverse intellectual nature of a student body that is also culturally, socially and economically different. Acknowledging that these magnificent young people with exciting and formulating minds need lessons that will arouse their natural curiosity and provoke critical thinking skills, I will develop and implement an engaged pedagogy that honors them, recognizes their abilities, and challenges their constantly expanding dendrites. Richard R. Powell also recognizes the need for a socially positive curriculum that promotes a movement beyond conventional instructional management: an attempt to explore alternative strategies, be flexible, be open and be aware of the dominant learning culture and whether it is equal for all. There is no greater honor than to help another individual come to a realization of their unique and natural talents—to facilitate another's blossoming in this world and to bring them to an awareness of their place in this continuum. It will be my role and daily challenge to devise relevant and engaging lesson plans that will help create deep thinkers and problem solvers, so that when problems do arise, the students themselves can devise the solution. The goal is to create loving and caring individuals who will take risks, establish realistic goals and assume personal responsibility for the results of their behavior; where the only competition is with themselves, the individual, and not with each other, and where the process is about discovering ideas and not about covering material. This will be a learner centered classroom that produces critical thinkers, who are at the same time deeply engaged in the subject at hand, while also enjoying the process and learning experience. This classroom will be a happy place where students come to learn, participate, and have fun. In

this type of environment discipline is not an issue as the students are engaged in exciting and stimulating lessons that demands all their attention. They choose to be there and learn; therefore happy and interested students have no reason to misbehave.

## **Motivation**

### ***From your point of view, what motivates students?***

#### ***In the Short-term?***

Students are motivated by their feelings and the desire to fit in. They are discovering a world beyond themselves and while they search for truth in a macro mindset, they yearn for day-to-day meaning as well as good feelings. Students want to be seen, known, praised and loved. I believe these to be intrinsic and at the root of all their actions. Students navigate the day in order to get through; getting through may be finding friends, sneaking unnoticed or acting out so some one, any one takes note of them.

#### ***In the Long-term?***

Students in my experience are much more motivated by the day to day and tend not to act in terms of the long-term. However, the high school students I hang out with weekly are asking deep and meaningful questions about purpose, origins, post life and are actively seeking answers to these universal questions. While these may not motivate daily interactions, they have a profound effect on their relationships and desires regarding worth, meaning and trust.

### ***How do you plan to motivate your students?***

Every student it seems is uniquely different in how they operate. With that being said however, I lead by example and often motivate with an energetic and contagious passion for life and for the content. I believe joy, patience, forgiveness, passion, understanding, love and peace are desirable and should be worn as armor within the classroom. I also believe that having a clear goal or purpose allows students to follow you into the adventure.

### ***How would you characterize your approach?***

My approach is content-reality-based-passion-love-relational-wild-unpredictable-routine with a taste of carpe diem. I say "it's a great day to be alive" often and truly mean it. I believe that life is to be danced, ran, flipped, jumped and held tight. Never tiptoed or watched idly as opportunity passes by. My approach is super relational. I believe that our favorite word is our own name and therefore I call people by their name and desire to understand the person behind that title. I lead by doing as well as by encouraging. I have a gift of words of affirmation or praise and I communicate and motivate with in this manner. I believe that if students know you care, they will begin to care themselves.

## **Building Relationships with Parents/Students**

### ***How will this become part of your classroom management plan?***

I understand that teacher is a relational profession where connecting the student with the community, parents, peers and teachers is a must. I have experienced the need for this community in the coaching I have done and therefore my classroom management plan reflects the importance of presenting a relationally positive, safe and comfortable environment. Relationships are at the heart of my plan and will be at the root of my daily interactions with students. Building relationships is not isolated to coffee shops and shopping malls, showing up and investing in your students lives will develop a relational connection that will allow everything you teach and advise to be accepted with a more open mind.

### ***How will you communicate with parents?***

Parents are the students everything. A lot of times if students are screwed up or right as rain, parents are to blame or to praise. Students look to their parents for acceptance as well as moral direction, encouragement, love, understanding and truth. A teacher will never replace the role and position of importance in a students' life and therefore the relationship with parents should be fostered and cultivated. I plan on using technology to keep parents in the

loop with things going on in the classroom. This includes email, twitter, instagram and skype. I want the parents to feel like they are apart of the process and that they are allies for their students and me. Parent teacher conferences are a big deal. I hope to make the most of my time in person with parents. I want to be consistent with praise of students as well as balancing that with constructive criticism. The praise will out number the critique.

***How will you get to know your students?***

Asking questions is the best way to get to know somebody. Asking questions however is only half of the process. The other half is listening. I desire to know the students and therefore listening to them is key. Students desire to be heard and when you actually do simply listen, its amazing the things that you hear them saying. Choice will also play a major role in getting to know my students. By giving projects with open-ended topics, I will get a look into what is important to my students and how they feel about it. Knowing their interests and then taking interest in them myself, will be huge for bridging the gap between student and teacher.

**Vision**

***In about 2 pages, depict a typical day in your "ideal" class. See yourself one year from today, and explain how your class feels, what the students are doing, how you are acting, and how problems are dealt with. Here, you are clearly conceiving your ideal "socially constructed classroom reality." Have fun and dream.***

November 9, 2013

It's Friday and everyone knows I love Friday. I love Wednesday too. They know that. But it's Friday and excitement is in the air. Something new, weird, crazy, epic, tweetable...something always happens on Friday. Five weeks ago the room was emptied of all desks and tables and an old man with a fight beard and big muscles taught every Tai Chi to help center our spirits and reflect upon a foreign culture we read about and knew their cookied fortunes. Three Fridays ago (well actually that was a Thursday because we didn't have class on Friday) Whitman was read from atop the biggest tree at school. We sipped tea and wrote about the relationship we had with the grass and the stars and the trees. Two Fridays ago was taught in the dark. The markers were glow-in-dark and we discussed how to have our audience hear our words and smell our verbs. Today is Friday.

We have been dealing with personal narratives as well as looking at how the American dream has become stuck in the past. We explore novels throughout American history that show this "dream." Last class they were challenged with the question: "When you dream with your eyes wide open, what is your dream? Is it different or the same as the American Dream?" The bell rings and students begin to enter into my Friday classroom. They enter into the world that is theirs and not yours. It is mine too. I am grateful. Every inch of every wall has been card-boarded. The cabinets, white board, windows...everything has cardboard over it. The class is asked to take a seat of their choosing. I sit on the ground. Tony sits on top of the girl he has been flirting with all semester's desk. He gets it. The rest of the students resort back to the herd. I push play. Martin Luther King Jr. begins to shout his dream. I click the triangle; Banský explains why art should be free as he tags a wall with a rat holding a gun made out of cheese. My friend Trevor then walks into the room. Trevor has a Phd and a beard and a couple of tattoos. Trevor travels the world telling other people's stories and in the process is writing his own. His message is one of experience, of doing, of questioning, of daring, of dreaming and of living.

The assignment is simply complex for a reason. Create a stencil, big or small, that encompasses your personal narrative or your wide-awake dream. The Lumineers are today's musical muses, and we dive in. There are no questions of huh or what or I don't get it. This silence is music to my ears. Drones freed from other people's answers and actions. My students know they are capable. They know that part of learning is struggling to understand, or get going or empathize. They try. We fail. Sometimes. Sometimes we succeed. And every now and then we change everything.

Rachel's dad owns a money tree. He is a slave to it. She lives in comfort while he lives obsessed with the watering can. She used to say things like, why does this even matter? They should just work harder? It is what it is? Why do you care so much? And now. Oh wow. Now. Rachel asks questions like...that's great but who's helping them? How did that make you feel? And I know what you mean; I am struggling with that too. My classroom was a catalyst for Rachel to realize whom she realizes is. She started to paint, ask questions to her classmates, began the steps of forgiving, fell in love with poetry and is inspired to fight against social injustice.

My classroom is a buzz of excitement, questions, spray paint cans shaking, music soothing and learning happening through each and every note. I want to challenge students to think for themselves, to take initiative, to put action to words, to be acquainted with silences as well as clapping. My classroom will demand a lot but give a lot in return. I love Fridays.