

Alistair Crockett

April 28, 2015

University of Mary

## PHILOSOPHY OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

The future classroom that I will teach in is one borne of fantasy and high hopes. It is a room filled with knowledge, the eagerness of students, and lively discussion and debate. It is here that history will come to life. I say this is a fantastical setting because I recognize the fact that it will not develop of its own accord. It will take a bevy of rules and procedures, a steady guiding hand, and a high level of devotion. That being said, my classroom management philosophy will revolve around students knowing, directly from the beginning of the course, what is expected of them, yet also knowing that they are welcome to express themselves in the classroom. My hope is that this will establish in students a sense of both responsibility and expressive thought, things required of them upon graduating high school and entering the fields of either college or career. Additionally, I wish for every student who enters my classroom to feel that he or she is welcome physically, emotionally, and socially. I believe they should feel safe and comfortable amongst their peers and I will strive to ensure that they do.

A precursor to teaching responsibility is the establishment of a set of classroom standards very early on. This can be accomplished by making the rules and procedures immediately evident to the students, then practicing and reinforcing them. There will be three basic rules set for the students. They include respect for school property, respect for one another, and respect for me as the instructor. All three are fundamental to any school code of conduct, as well as expected in general society. Respect for school property would include not vandalizing desks and lockers or not roughly using technology equipment. Respect for one another is crucial to maintaining a safe and welcoming classroom environment. Any form of bullying or student aggression will not be tolerated, and that policy is for the good of the entire student body. Finally, respect shown towards me as the instructor is necessary in ensuring that the classroom functions smoothly and the students are taught the content of the class with all due effort and safety.

Classroom procedures will also be established within the first days and weeks of class. The procedures will not be gone over all at once, but rather as the days pass and the students become increasingly familiar with classroom expectations. The first procedure requires that students must find

their individual seats when the bell rings at the beginning of the class period. Loitering about the classroom will only delay the progress of the class. I anticipate that this may take a few days to solidify, especially at the beginning of the school year when students are socializing with friends after a long summer. Once the students are assigned their first pieces of homework they will learn the next procedure, which is to hand their overnight homework into the basket designated for the class. These baskets will be separated according to class title and period. A third procedure will be in allowing the students time at the beginning of each week to copy down the weekly agenda. This agenda will be a rough draft of what I am planning to cover in content that week, as well as if there are any assignments. It is subject to change if the class progresses differently than expected and is therefore flexible. The purpose of this procedure is to make certain that students know what to expect and to also teach them the responsibility of keeping track of their schedules. Under this system, there will be very little opportunity for a student to deny he or she knew about a particular assignment or due date. The other procedures include raising a hand to ask questions or make a comment, waiting to line up at the door until allowed so by the teacher, asking permission and using a hall pass to go to the restroom, and the tardy or late procedures already established by the school. The beginning of the school year is also an excellent time to establish end-of-day procedures in which the students will be expected to straighten the desks if they were shifted around, push chairs in, return any extra resource materials to their original places, and pick up any scrap paper that may have fallen onto the floor.

Harry Wong, in his professional video titled ‘The Effective Teacher: Procedures & Routines,’ proposes that teachers also establish a single attention-getting procedure. This could involve a teacher using a “fist-of-five” or simply raising their hand, silently, to get the student’s attention. These procedures are extremely effective if taught at the beginning of the school year and, as should always be done with procedures, are reinforced and reused regularly. Wong supplied various techniques that I found interesting and promising, but I truly appreciated one procedure in particular and it is what I intend on utilizing in my own classroom. This is the procedure in which the teacher raises his or her hand, without

saying a word, and the students fall into silence as they realize that the instructor wishes for their attention. I appreciate this attention-getter because it is simple, easy for students to understand and practice, and does not involve the teacher yelling for attention or getting verbally frustrated (Wong, n.d. a).

Another facet to good teaching involves collaboration with education colleagues, parents, and students. This collaboration will work in ensuring that my students are receiving the best education possible. Collaboration with colleagues allows for the sharing of ideas and tips, both on classroom management issues and content instruction. I plan on working with these colleagues through Professional Learning Communities or in everyday interaction, as well as through any additional venues available. Collaboration with the parents of students assures parents that their child's education is not a run-of-the-mill education, but rather a very personal and unique experience. This collaboration will begin with a beginning of the year letter to the parents explaining what the course will cover, what their child may expect to do during the term in regards to assignments and projects, and a welcome to parents to contact me with any questions or concerns, or even if they would like to participate in the classroom. Parents will be able to contact me via the email address I provide within the letter. The students will be required to return a portion of this letter with the signature of at least one parent, so as to make certain that one parent or guardian received it. To view a sample of this letter, refer to Appendix A. Finally, creating a collaborative relationship with my students will be central to my teaching philosophy. I strongly believe that students learn best when they feel and know that their teachers genuinely care about and are invested in their education. These teacher-student relationships can be developed using simple strategies, such as the "I noticed" strategy espoused by Jim Fay in his book 'Love and Logic', in which the instructor remarks on a student interest or accomplishment (Fay, 2010). To further solidify my interest and investment in the lives of my students, I plan on creating a student accomplishment board. This board may contain written notes from me to students, perhaps highlighting a superb presentation given by a student, or newspaper clippings detailing the goings-on of athletes, musicians, or students involved in any

program or activity. Its purpose is to show students that their deeds, scholastic or extracurricular, are recognizable and commendable.

Despite the rules, procedures, and collaborative plans I have in place, I have no doubt that there will be times where I struggle with unruly or disruptive students, as well as frustrated parents. Although I cannot plan for every single scenario, I do have general outlines for how I may handle those situations. For students who are either having trouble focusing in class, finishing homework assignments on time, or are disrupting the general classroom, I plan on ascertaining if there is a specific reason behind those troublesome behaviors. Some of the potential reasons could include an unstable home life, a recent parent divorce, a death in the family, a sickness, or a wide range of other factors. If it is something similar to those listed, I as the teacher will be better able to connect and collaborate with the student if I am aware of the situation or circumstances. If the lack of student focus or participation is not due to one of those factors and no reason behind their behavior can be found, I can help to improve the student's learning by trying to form a connection between the content of the curriculum and the student's self-system, an approach strongly supported by Marzano. This could mean connecting an historical event to a particular interest, or simply by asking the student for his or her opinion or thoughts on various subjects. Finding any way to positively engage the student in class activities will be better than nothing at all. Marzano also makes an excellent point in saying that "Human beings do best in an environment of feedback..." (Marzano, et al, 2003). I take this point very seriously because I believe that explaining to students why a behavior, whether noncompliant or aggressive, is incorrect may help in remedying the issue at hand. A student simply may not understand why talking to his or her friend during class is unacceptable. Yet by explaining that such behavior interferes with the learning of both that individual and the group at large, the student may begin to understand why their disruptive actions are troublesome.

Student behavior, although almost always caused by something, is not always easily attributed to external factors. If I am unable to forge a bond with a student in an attempt to get past whatever issues he or she is facing, it will be necessary for me to discipline the student in a way that is not injurious to their

ambition to learn, yet guarantees a productive learning environment for all other students. Some of these disciplinary actions, as outlined by Love and Logic, may include giving the student a behavior choice. In this scenario, good behavior may allow the student to work in a group, whereas poor behavior requires that the assignment be finished individually. A second option is to make an out of class appointment with the student to work through the class material or to discuss their misbehavior in the classroom (Fay, 2010). Among the students misbehaving in my classroom, I may encounter students who are simply practicing oppositional defiant behavior. In this case, I will borrow and use the advisements of Thomas Zirpoli by completing functional assessments of ODD students in an effort to identify the root of the problem, intervene very early on before the behavior gets out of hand, and establish self-discipline skills for the students (Zirpoli, 2012). This final factor, the formation of self-discipline skills, fits with the portion of my classroom management philosophy in which I teach students responsibility in an attempt to prepare them for life after high school. There are a plethora of other behavioral management options available, each according to the severity of the student actions. It is always important to remember, in my opinion, that each situation is unique. Some behaviors may seem reminiscent of past scenarios, but we teachers must improvise our approach to problems according to the needs of each individual student.

If the student behavior is more aggressive than simply not participating, my first concern will be in guaranteeing the safety of the other students and then the student at hand. Teaching at the secondary level means that any physical restraint will likely be impossible, in which case removing myself and the other students from any dangerous situation will be necessary.

Contending with frustrated or angry parents is another issue that I will not be able to fully prepare for since each situation will be unique. At this point, my plan for working with parent concerns will be the four step process outlined in 'Love and Logic'. These steps include collecting and understanding the parental concern, reiterating the issue so that the parents are assured of my attention to their viewpoints, offering my own thoughts, and then opening myself up to working the problem out alongside the parents.

I wish for parents to know that my sole goal is to provide a superb education for their child, and that involves working through any and all messy situations with an open mind and flexibility (Fay, 2010).

There are so many factors involved with classroom management that it is nearly impossible to think of them all. Planning out rules and procedures, student discipline, and collaboration with colleagues, parents, and students are only a few of the large but vital steps which need to be taken as I prepare for my future classroom. In the end, however, I will measure the success of my classroom by the amount of education I can pass onto my students.

## Appendix A

Dear Parents,

Allow me to introduce myself as Miss Crockett. I will be the instructor for your child's U.S. History course this year. I greatly look forward to a year of learning about the founding of our nation, its greatest accomplishments, and its global endeavors.

I am simply writing to inform you of some of the expectations I hold for this class. Every student should arrive to class prepared with a notebook and writing utensil, as well as the textbook assigned to them.

There will be a variety of assignments given during the course of this class, including writing assignments and hands on projects. Students will be informed of any long-term projects via the course syllabus.

I will gladly make myself available to offer additional help to students prior to school starting each day, after school, or during prep hours. I am open to making appointments with both students and parents to discuss and resolve any issues, academic or otherwise. Please feel free to contact me via myemail@email.com if you have any questions or concerns. Please sign, date, and provide a phone number by which I can reach you (optional) at the bottom portion of this letter and have your child return it to me. Also feel free to write any questions you may have and I will endeavor to respond. Thank you, and let's look forward to a fantastic school year!

Alistair Crockett

---

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Questions/Concerns:



## References

Fay, Jim. (2010). *Teaching with Love & Logic*. Love & Logic Press: Golden, CO.

Marzano, R., Marzano, J. & Pickering, D., (2003). *Classroom management that works: Research-based strategies for every teacher*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Wong, H. (n.d. a). *Effective Teacher: Procedures and Routines* [video]. CA: Harry K. Wong Publications, Inc.

Zirpoli, T. (2012). *Behavior Management: Positive Applications for Teachers* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.