

**Mike Ray**  
**November 2007**  
**0535371**

## **CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### **A. Philosophy**

“Leaders are Learners.” This is a statement that I have heard over and over again in reference to the role of an educator, mentor, manager, or anyone in some kind of an influential role. What it means is that in order to be a good leader, you have to first make your priority to be a learner. You must demonstrate your willingness to learn about those you are leading; you must show your ability to adapt to the changing environments and world at large around you; you must be open to change, and show wisdom and discernment in the process of making it a part of your schema; and by living your life in such a way you will affect those you are leading so that they see this in you and will want to live likewise.

I believe that my students will benefit from my “Leaders are Learners” approach to teaching because they will find that I will care for them – academically and personally. My students will find my classroom to be a dynamic classroom – one where although the rules stay the same, the environment changes. They will find themselves involved in the lives of others: those people they see, hear about, and read about in the media, and also their classmates. They will find themselves in the middle of community, and I believe that in order for this to happen it has to start with me – it has to start with a willingness by their teacher to leave his pride and hardened shell of shallowness behind and engage them in a real, meaningful way.

Needless to say, I believe strongly in the importance of community, empathy, and communal care. I believe that in order to make a global impact, you have to start

somewhere – you have to start by making an local impact, and I say this based upon my belief that everyone has some desire to positively affect the lives of others – it is part of what makes us human. I believe that by basing the overarching classroom environment and rules around this we learn about community, and as I desire to teach and minister to the *whole* person, I believe this to be of utmost importance.

Academically, I believe in the utilization of all forms of learning: auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. Although it might not be possible to write three lesson plans, (one for each type of learner) I do believe it is possible to incorporate all three types, in varying levels, into each lesson. I want my students to succeed, also I will do what it takes to assist them in this – I want to provide them with the chance to do well, so I will try to do my part in making lessons and examples personal, relevant, and in the vernacular that speaks best to them.

I believe it important for children to learn how to be a critical thinker. I believe that this is possible without teaching them to be critics – teaching them to put-down everything and anything. What I desire for my students is for them to develop the mental ability to properly evaluate, give weight to, and decide upon all the information that is given to them. I do not want them to merely replicate what I say and do – I want them to evaluate all I do, (as I am human and greatly flawed) and I want them to decide which parts of me and my message they should take to heart. I then want them to take this skill into their everyday lives: when they watch TV, listen to the radio, are talking to the parents at dinner time. I want to provide them with the skills to make decisions, and to how to make informed, confident decisions.

## **B. Theoretical Bases**

For many years now I have considered myself to be a Humanist – I see great value in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, and have seen these actuated in both myself and others. Due to my humanistic nature and teaching/learning style, I will attempt to create a safe environment for my students to learn in. To establish this I plan on using not only classroom management foci, (such as a bully-free zone and having the class share with each other encouragements) but also positive teaching methods, (such as “two stars and a wish” and multiple entry-points for subjects like PE). I realize that everyone is different and some students will have no inhibitions, and some will take a long time to feel comfortable, however once this safety has been established, I believe the children will feel more comfortable in themselves. They will be willing to try new things, push themselves, and not afraid to fail because they know that if they do, it is OK – they have a support network around them, and although they failed this time, their previous success in other areas will encourage them to try again.

Beyond Humanism, I strongly believe in the utilization of a Behaviourist approach. Having worked directly with children ages 5-18, I can say that there is great importance to the “rewards” system. Although it is not universal, and everyone searches for a different sense of accomplishment, overall I would say that by rewarding and acknowledging positive behaviours we encourage the repetition of them. I would tend to shy away from the comparison of BF Skinner’s pigeons to a grade 2 child, however from my experience, if you reward and acknowledge the student for acting and behaving in the way you desire them too they will want to receive that acknowledgement again, and will act accordingly. Because of the success of this approach I believe that it is possible to use to obtain not only order in the classroom, but social success of the children, (ie. praising the children for

silently waiting for their classmates to speak). The danger I see with this approach is that if the reward ceases, the behaviour will as well, so I will have to be careful in both *what* and *how* I reward children, (I want to be able to continue doing this for the duration of the year without forgetting to, or without exhausting applicable resources).

### **C. Teaching Strategies**

In my classroom I plan on utilizing a variety of teaching strategies. The strategy that was most often used when I was a student was *lecturing*. Although I am an auditory learner and thrived in these classroom settings, many of my peers did not. Because of this reason I do not plan on teaching the same way I was taught. I do believe there is a place for lectures, such as in science. I might use a brief lecture to convey key points to the students, and to give them a basis for studying. Lecturing might be the most effective way of transmitting a large amount of information very quickly, but I do not believe that for the purposes of memory recall and overall application and learning it is the best method of teaching.

In conjunction with lecturing, I believe *group discussions* can be a very effective form of learning. I look at my wife as an example: for years she has studied and learned social studies and history best when put in a scenario with interaction and meaningful dialogue. She finds that when she is able to bounce her ideas and “understandings” off of others and take the ideas that her peers have and learn and modify them, she is able to recall and remember facts, concepts, and ideas much more effectively than she would in a lecture setting. I think that following a mini-lecture on Canadian history a group discussion, (in groups of 3-5 students) could be very effective in allowing those people who picked up on the lecture material to inform those people who did not as well, and

allows those people who will have more creative ideas the ability to hear and interact with those understood the lecture.

Similar to group discussions, *cooperative learning* has a very important role in my classroom. This teaching strategy involves lots of hands-on work by the students to achieve a common goal. For example, during our unit on The Environment I might place students in groups of 4 and ask them to prepare a short presentation on energy consumption. I would then assign the group 4 parts to the assignment, so that each member of the group could pick which part-of-the-whole they would like to work on. Then, after each student has had the chance to research their topic/part of the presentation, they could, as and “expert,” educate the other members of their group with their knowledge, and then proceed to share with class. This method of teaching invokes a large onus of social-responsibility between the members of each group to finish their task and contribute to the whole, which I also believe is an important part of my desired classroom environment.

*Guest speakers* I see as being very effective tools in the classroom. People who have firsthand knowledge of a topic I believe are better suited to share and impart information to others than someone who is merely a student of the subject, (such as the case if a Native Band Elder was to talk to the class about Aboriginal issues over myself). Guest speakers, when wisely chosen and well prepared, can be a lasting memory in the life and mind of student, which is ultimately what I want to achieve: having and providing a positive influence on students not only in the present, but for years to come.)

In addition to these teaching strategies in my classroom I believe there is a place for many others: field trips, questioning, discovery learning, peer tutoring, and demonstrations.

The amount in which I will use these other strategies will vary, and will make, in part, my classroom the dynamic classroom I desire it to be.

#### **D. Proactive Management**

Organizationally, I plan on spending time prior to the start of the school year for lesson planning and curriculum organization. As each year will provide me with new students, parents, and a new classroom dynamic, I want to spend thoughtful consideration sorting out the fine-details of the year. There are many questions I would need to ask myself: “What will my students be interested in?” “What about my class would I like if *I* was a student?” “How can I make this more relevant and interesting?” I will also need to consider the length of each unit and make sure I fulfill all my PLO’s for the year, and have everything fit cohesively together. My organization before the year even starts will reveal itself throughout the year as due care and attention of my students.

In order to help the students in my class succeed, I plan on setting forth my basic rules and expectations at the beginning of the year, starting on day one. In setting the classroom rules I do not believe I would be blunt in merely dictating them, but instead I might have the class brainstorm different ideas of what they think would be appropriate in the classroom; in regards to respecting themselves, each other, and the teacher. Because how the year starts and is controlled will affect the rest of the year I want to make sure we spend ample time on creating classroom guidelines and our code of conduct. I also want the students to personalize it, hence my desire to involve them in the creation of it. I also want to not waste any time in getting to know my students both by name and personally, as doing this quickly will help create a healthy community environment. First impressions last a lifetime, so I want mine to count with them.

To keep students actively and meaningfully involved in their own education process there are few elemental things which I believe I must do: create an environment where students feel accepted and safe, a place where their opinions, dreams, and desires are honored and respected, and a setting where they are encouraged to learn. Without these attributes, it will be much harder to ensure the involvement of the students in their own learning, and it seems logical that there will be more misbehaviors.

In my classroom I plan on honoring my students by caring about them and what they learn. I want to show my students that I am interested in their daily lives through small one-on-one interactions as well as such things as “show-and-tell.” I also want to show the kids that I have a sense of humor and love to laugh. Laughter can be a very strong bridge between people and I want my students to know that I am willing to meet them on that bridge. I also want to create a unity and oneness in the classroom – a feeling that it’s “all for one and one for all.” I want them to see how I care for each of them, and decide to care for each other in the same way: if one of us struggles, all of us struggle, and all of us work together to help the one. To help build this unity I think it might be a neat idea to have a time set aside at the beginning of the year to come up with a class name, mascot, and maybe a theme song – something that we can work on together, and something that the students will see as putting us together on the same “team,” (just as in sports!)

As a part of our “team” commitment, we will work hard to create a safe place for each other to be involved in class and group discussions. If a student is scared to share with the class because they fear judgment and discrimination by their peers, they will not share. As a teacher, or the “coach” of my “team,” I need to set an example for my students and give an appropriate response to that shy student who speaks out even one time, so that

they feel safe and know that since they spoke once and were not criticized, that they can do it again with the same reaction. By seeing my reaction, I believe my students will learn what is expected of them in our community.

To help achieve my desire for a healthy classroom community I believe that it would be pertinent to have a number of “Ice breaker” activities at the beginning of the year to help students get to know each other and me. An example of this might be in playing “Two truths and a lie.” In this game, an individual introduces themselves to the group, and proceeds to tell two things that are true about themselves and one thing that is a lie – it is then the job of the group to guess which one thing is the lie. An activity such as this could bring out some really neat information about my students as they try to come up with the most elaborate things in their lives to cover up for the basic lie they tell. Even though these activities are important to me at the beginning of the year, I believe I would continue to use them through the entire year to continually assist us in becoming a more cohesive group.

I also believe that my use of proper questioning skills will promote active learning and participation by the students, (which will help prevent misbehaviors and other off-task behaviors). By asking open-ended questions, ones that do not require “yes/no” answers, students are held account able to think. These questions are not so much questions as they are a request of the teacher to hear what the student thinks, (ie. Tell me what you think about Christopher Columbus’ journey to North America.) Students should also be given time to formulate answers and rehearse in their head what it is that they want to say: this is where the use of “wait time” is very important. Another example of a good question which both holds students accountable and gives them time to formulate their answers is, “No hands or shouting out please – I’ll pick a few of you to respond. The question is, ‘What



are three of Canada's provinces?' (allow 10 seconds of wait time) Alright, Nadia, what did you come up with?"

During transitions between subjects and/or tasks is a potential time frame where a teacher can lose control of a class. I plan on using an attention getting signal, such as clapping. Having rehearsed and discussed this at the beginning of the year, students will know that when I clap a rhythm they are to respond by clapping the rhythm back to me. They will also know that this means all eyes and ears will be focused on me, and all hands and feet will stop what they are doing. I also plan on spending the first part of each day to quickly establish with the students the outline for the day, which will be either written on the board, or visually shown using symbols on a wall-chart. I believe by establishing the daily tasks students will already have an idea as to what is coming when I call for their attention.

To help in the prevention of off-task behavior I plan on actively monitoring the students. My students will find that I am everywhere – I will be walking around the class, checking in with them, and avoiding leaving them unattended unless absolutely necessary. They will also know that I am not coming around to disturb them, as I want them to stay on-task, but I will be there to help those who sit patiently with their hands up. I want my students to find that I acknowledge not only bad behavior, but good behavior, (*especially* good behavior!) By constantly checking in with students to see how they are doing I will be able to notice when there is an improvement, and give them specific feedback on what they improved on.

All these proactive management approaches are vital to a fluid, healthy classroom, where students are able to affectively work in either a group or individual setting. I also

believe that all these approaches will help in my ability to better educate the whole-person of my students by helping them succeed, feel safe, and know what is expected of them.

### **E. Responding to Student Disruptions**

When misbehaviors first occur, I plan on using a series of low key responses to try to resolve the problem. A low key response is a response to a student action that is not meant to be one that disrupts the classroom, yet informs the misbehaving student that their actions are not appropriate at that time. A few of the low key responses that I will use are proximity, touch, using their name, a gesture to stop, pausing, and ignoring. Depending on the situation, one might be more appropriate than another. As an example, I might use “proximity” to try to dissolve the whispering students at the back of the class as I do not want to interrupt the lesson, as this is what they are doing.

If I find that my low key response(s) are not being noticed or are simply not enough, I would try “squaring off.” This is a four-step response; the first of which is pausing. Then I would turn myself towards the student, (squaring off with them) give a short verbal request, (ie. “Please stop talking”) and finally give a short affirmation that they are going to follow my request, (ie. “Thank you”). Although this form of response does interrupt the lesson, it is quite brief and to-the-point. A few factors to consider when squaring off with a student are proximity, body language, and tone of voice, as I do not want the child to feel backed into a corner, or that I’m too far away to notice if they persist.

These first two responses to misbehaviors have much to do with the teacher: they are responsible for letting the students know that they are being a disruption to the class and are making it hard to teach. The next response I might try begins by giving the responsibility for making an appropriate decision back to the student. As an example of a

situation where I would utilize student choice is if I saw a student listening to his iPod in class. I would say something like, “You know the rules about listening to music/iPods in class – choose to either put it away in your bag and not bring it out again, or choose to put it on my desk so I can keep it safe until the end of the day.” In a situation like this it is clear to the student what I would like them to do – not listen to their music. However, both choices result with the same ending – the student moving the iPod elsewhere and not listening to it. I must be careful, however, that I do not come up with choices that are not really choices but ultimatums, as these will not be beneficial to our teacher/student relationship.

If a misbehavior has potential to turn into a power struggle I must be sure to remain clam. Although difficult because of my emotional investment in the situation, showing myself to be calm with help in achieving my desired end result. A number of ways that I can respond to a situation like this are by ignoring it, short circuiting it, using language attribution, describing the situation to the student, and providing a choice. As students tend to look to their peers for affirmation, it is likely they will want an ally – I must deal with them first, (possibly by quickly squaring off with them with “the look” and the word “Please.”) Once I know it is just myself and the one student involved I believe it would be beneficial to use attribution language to shift the responsibility for the situation back to the student. An example of this would be, “I asked you to put your iPod away and you are refusing. How would you like me to respond to your decision to not do what you have been asked?” After this statement the student will probably try to save-face with their peers by giving some quick-witted comment or gesture, which is to be expected and is **not** the issue at hand, so as long as they continue to put the iPod away, I will move on with the lesson and give them a simple “thank you” to indicate that the matter is now closed.

A student who is constantly misbehaving might need to be “chatted” to in an informal setting. This “informal chat” should occur in an open yet private environment, such as just outside the classroom or in the classroom during recess. During this time I should define the problem, and together with the student try to generate some solutions or alternatives. If I find that the student is persistently defiant even following our chat and new measures and solutions, I will want to have a formal meeting with the student where we draw up a formal contract stating how we will both behave towards each other. If this contract is broken then I will take this matter to their parents to the principal for further discipline. All-the-while I hope that I will be able to stay in contact with the students parents, sharing with them both the downs and the ups, (*especially* the ups) as I do not want this to escalate to a meeting with the principal only to have them blind-sided by the issues at hand. After all, they know their children better than I do and possibly can help me out my quest to help educate and teach the class and their child.

#### **F. Communication with Parents**

One of the classic and best ways to get to know and communicate with parents is during parent/teacher nights and interviews at the school. During these sessions parents can come into the classroom to see what kind of an environment their child is learning in, and how I conduct my lessons and teaching. Parents are also able to ask questions about the school year, myself, and how their child is doing both in and out of class, (to the best of my knowledge). I could also use this time as a chance for me to provide opportunities for the parents to become active participants in the education of their child. By passing around a paper with room for parents to write their name, number, and e-mail on it, I can contact

them when I might need help with a demonstration, event, or even for a simple Art Gallery we might hold.

Being very technology minded, I think I would try to encourage the parents of my students to use e-mail to contact me, and as a way of me contacting them. I could send messages, notices, and updates home to them this way, as well as keeping a simple BLOG or website maintained with a list of upcoming events and dates for them to check out, (as I have skills in web-coding and graphic design).

For the purpose of report cards and anything I would deem “formal,” I would do all of this in paper form and send these things home with the students to give to their parents. If parents wanted to discuss these items they could come in, or schedule a time to come talk to me in person, as I do not believe in having conversations that may be confrontational or emotional over either the phone or e-mail. This face-to-face contact I would also use when discussing the behavior issues of students – I believe that in-person conversations lead to fewer miscommunications than those conducted from behind a telephone or computer.