

# **Five Aspects of My Classroom Management Plan**

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## **Behavior Standards and Consequences**

As a science teacher I think it is important to stress that there is a difference between general classroom behavior standards and science safety rules (Frazier & Sterling, 2005, p. 32). As safety is a HUGE concern for all science teachers, self included, I will develop and present students with a set of science safety rules and a science safety contract. In the past, it has always been my practice to create my own classroom behavior expectations and present them to my students on the second day of school. Having read the Jones and Jones text has however changed my point of view. I no longer need to fear that my students will take the task of developing classroom behavior standards in a light manner as, “students usually take the process seriously and propose reasonable rules for the teacher” (Savage, 1999, p. 35). Beginning this school year (2010-2011) my students will help me to develop a set of classroom behavior *standards* (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 177). While I have always been hesitant to do this in the past I can now see the inherent value in taking the democratic approach. If the democratic approach gives students a greater sense of ownership in the classroom, which will most likely in turn develop within them a greater commitment to follow the rules, it would behoove me give it a try (Savage, 1999, p. 34).

Students and I will develop classroom behavior standards on the second day of school. The following is an outline (similar to that laid out in the Jones and Jones text, p. 178) of the approach I will take to develop our classroom behavior standards:

- We will have a class discussion about why it is important to develop behavior standards that all members of the class agree to follow. Examples of adult rules (traffic laws, paying taxes, etc.) will be used to help stimulate the discussion. Students will come to an understanding that behavior standards must exist in order for a safe (emotional and physical) learning environment to be created.
- Students will be asked to individually write 2 or 3 behavior standards that each student in the class should follow. To fuel students’ thoughts I will ask them to think about what the class should look like and sound like (Gable, Hester, Rock, & Hughes, 2009, p. 196). Students will be asked to

develop behavior standards that will make the classroom “a good place for everyone to learn” (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 180).

- Student volunteers will share what they wrote with the entire class [if students aren't willing to volunteer their answers to the class (after all, it will only be the second day of school), I will collect the standards they wrote and share them with the class, on a random basis]. Student developed behavior standards will be typed into a Microsoft Word® document that will be displayed on the “big screen” for students to see (and saved by the teacher for later use). As students volunteer their standards we will discuss how to write the standards in a positive manner (“Listen quietly while another person is talking), as they will most likely be presented in a negative (“Don't talk while others are talking”) (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 180).
- As I teach 4 to 5 sections of the same class, I will have each class create their own list of standards. Before class on the third day of school I will compile each class' list and condense them down into one list with no more than 5 standards. The list will be kept to no more than 5 because students will not be able to keep track of too many (resulting in more misbehavior) and I will be able to more easily enforce standards if the list is kept to a minimum (Sprick, 2009, p. 116).
- On the third day of school students will be presented with the compiled list of classroom behavior standards. I will explain to students the process I went through when condensing their lists down to no more than 5 standards (for all classes). Each student will be given a copy of the agreed upon behavior standards and they will be required to keep it in their science binder all year. The behavior standards will also be posted in a prominent place in the classroom—on a bulletin board at the front of the classroom (Sterling, 2009, p. 30).

In the past, as I did with my behavior expectations, I developed consequences for violations and presented them to my students on the second day of school. However, in the future, to ensure that “students are knowledgeable of the consequences and understand that they are not arbitrarily prescribed” we will also develop a set of consequences using the democratic approach (Frazier & Sterling, 2005, p. 33). Another

area of concern that I've always been displeased with when it comes to the consequences I present to students is that I have always used a progressive consequence system. I will be the first to admit that I was very inconsistent with issuing consequences for behavior expectation violations. I believe that this is due, in part, to the fact that the punishment didn't always fit the crime. The CHAMPS text helped me to see that "misbehaviors are not equivalent" (Sprick, 2009, p. 137). Blurting out during a class discussion is not the same as hitting another student. The following is an outline of the approach I will take to develop a set of non-progressive consequences for behavior standard violations (Sprick, 2009, p. 138):

- On the third day of school, after students have been presented with the compiled list of classroom behavior standards we will begin discussing the importance of having a set of consequences. Students will be reminded that even in larger society there are consequences for violating laws—if you speed, you will get a speeding ticket.
- The students and teacher will complete the table below, identifying misbehaviors that appropriately fit into each of the 3 categories.

<b>Category 1 Violations</b>	<b>Category 2 Violations</b>	<b>Category 3 Violations</b>
"Menu" of Consequences: • Reminder • Time-owed • Detention	"Menu" of Consequences: • Reminder • Time-owed • Detention • Parent Contact	"Menu" of Consequences: • Office referral
Misbehaviors:	Misbehaviors:	Misbehaviors:

- As I teach 4 to 5 sections of the same class, I will have each class create their own list of misbehaviors for each category. Before class on the fourth day of school I will compile each class' list and condense them down into one list.
- On the fourth day of school each student will be given a copy of the agreed upon consequences for behavior standard violations and they will be required to keep it in their science binder all year.

Over the course of the first several weeks of school, particularly the first and second weeks, behavior standards will be taught and reviewed. As CHAMPS suggests, one of the best ways to help students understand the behavior standards is to “demonstrate specific examples of following and not following the rules (behavior standards)” (Sprick, 2009, p. 118). I believe that in my junior high classes this may be done most effectively by having students role play positive and negative examples of following the behavior standards. This can be done by breaking the class down into small groups and/or pairs and assigning each group/pair a specific positive or negative behavior expectation to role play. I will also try the “Rules in the Sack” activity that is described in the Jones and Jones text (p. 191). For this activity, rules will be written on cards and placed in a sack. Students will draw a rule out of the sack and explain it to the rest of the class. It may also be possible to include positive and negative examples of the behavior standards on the cards, have students draw a card, and determine whether it is a positive or negative example of a particular behavior standard.

To “minimize the confusion and tension associated with instances when parents must be contacted about a student’s inappropriate behavior” I will send home a short memo and a copy of the agreed upon classroom behavior standards and consequences for parents to review (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 182). Students will be required to return the memo, with a parent/guardian signature. This memo will be sent home via each student’s Friday folder. The behavior standards and consequences will also be posted on my class website: <http://teacherweb.com/MI/HoltJuniorHighSchool/MrsKilgore/>. More information about Friday folders and my class website can be found in the “Parent Communication” section.

## **Instructional Activity Expectations**

The transition from 6<sup>th</sup> grade (middle school) to 7<sup>th</sup> grade (junior high school) at Holt Public Schools is DRASTIC, as the middle school philosophy and junior high school philosophy are very different. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to spend time teaching students my expectations. I would not, however, say that I have ever been super effective in doing so. At the end of the school year that just concluded a colleague and I were discussing how we might make our expectations for each instructional activity more explicit to our students. At the time we had no solutions, but I am encouraged by what I have learned during this course!

As it easier to lessen highly structured procedures than it is to try and implement more structure into low structured classrooms, I will begin the school year with a significant amount of structure in place (Sprick, 2009, p. 156). A contributing factor to my high structure classroom will be the teaching and implementation of high expectations for each of the different types of instructional activities that take place in my classroom. Each set of my expectations define behaviors that are appropriate for the type of activity that is taking place—expected behaviors for cooperative learning groups differs from the behaviors that are expected during test taking (Gable, Hester, Rock, & Hughes, 2009, p. 197).

Explicit instruction in what my expectations are is key! Lessons on expectations will have 3 components—teaching of the expectations, observation of student behavior, and feedback provided to students (Sprick, 2009, pp. 209-211). The following is an outline of how I anticipate each of these lessons taking place:

- To avoid confusion as to what is expected, expectations for each particular activity will be taught immediately before students are expected to participate in the activity—I will not teach all expectations at once (Sprick, 2009, p. 209).
- ***Teaching of the Expectations***. Just prior to each type of instructional activity taking place I will spend 5 to 7 minutes explaining what my expectations for student behavior during that type of activity are. A Microsoft PowerPoint® slide (see the attached file) outlining my expectations will be displayed on the “big screen” for all students to see. Each slide includes behaviors related to

conversation, how students may get help, what students are or are not permitted to do, whether or not they are permitted to leave their seat, etc. I have chosen not to specifically use the “CHAMPS” acronym as I fear that my students may see this as elementary-ish. I will specifically discuss each expectation with students, providing positive and negative examples (possibly some role play) as necessary.

- ***Observation of Student Behavior.*** To determine whether or not students are meeting my behavior expectations I will circulate and scan the classroom while students are working (Sprick, 2009, p. 210). Through this process I will be able to gather data that will allow me to determine exactly what my feedback to students should be.
- ***Feedback Provided to Students.*** Students need to know if they are meeting my expectations and an effective way to make this happen is to provide them with feedback during and after each instructional activity. I will provide students with age-appropriate praise when their behavior is meeting my expectations and I will provide students with immediate corrective feedback when their behavior is not meeting my expectations (Sprick, 2009, p. 211). At the beginning of the school year, the first couple of times that a particular activity is done I will spend several minutes speaking with the class about my general observations of their behavior during the activity. I will let them know if their behavior was appropriate or inappropriate. I will also stress what they can continue to do well or what they can do to improve upon their behavior the next time that particular type of activity is done (Sprick, 2009, p. 214).

## Parent Communication

While I do not completely avoid communicating with parents, I certainly don't seek out opportunities to do so. I certainly would not classify effective parent communication as one of my strengths. I agree with Jones and Jones (2010) when they state that "many teachers indicate that parent contacts are difficult and relatively undesirable aspect of teaching (p. 137). The reason that I have felt this way is because I have limited my communication with parents (other than back-to-school night and conferences) to negative contacts—making a phone call or sending an e-mail in the event of behavior or academic problems. I have come to realize that I must communicate "small bits of good news all year long" (Davis & Yang, 2009, p. 62). The following are some of the more unique ways in which I will communicate (positively and negatively) with parents throughout the school year:

- Prior to the beginning of the school year, perhaps a week before the scheduled start of school, I will send a message to parents utilizing the "Message Center" feature of the Skyward® student information system that our district uses (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 139 and Sprick, 2009, p. 53). The message will essentially be an e-mail that introduces myself to the parents of my future students. In the message I will communicate my desire to develop positive parent-teacher contacts, invite parents to back-to-school night, give them advance notice of the materials/documents that they should look for their child to bring home during the first week of school, and perhaps a list of supplies that students will need for the class (as there are usually good back-to-school sales before school starts), etc. A similar printed message will be left for students and/or parents to pick-up at the walk-around before school starts and sent home on the first day of school in order to assure that all parents receive the information.
- Each year our school hosts a back-to-school night. The purpose of this night is to communicate teacher and team expectations with parents. Due to the format of back-to-school night at the junior high school where I teach, it is difficult to spend time verbally communicating my expectations to parents. In place of my verbal expectations I will provide parents with a written document that outlines or highlights those things which are of most concern to parents—what we



will learn about during the school year, how their child will be graded/assessed, how they can communicate with me, etc. (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 143).

- Midway through each trimester our district requires teachers to issue each student a progress report grade. Progress reports are distributed to parents immediately before each of our 3 sets of parent-teacher conferences. These progress reports indicate the grade their child is currently earning and provides the opportunity for teachers to include p to 3 comments (from a bank of comments).
- Our school provides each student with a student agenda on the first day of school. While the agenda is intended to provide students with a place to track their assignments for each class it also provides an avenue of communication between school and home. There are several ways in which I will use these agendas to communicate with parents, some of which I have used before and other ways which I have not. To communicate to parents that their child has an incomplete or missing assignment I will stamp the child's agenda with my "Incomplete Assignment" or "Missing Assignment" stamp when a child does not have or does not submit an assignment that is due. In the event that a child is tardy to my class I will write a note to the parent in the child's agenda (this is required for teachers by our administration). I will also use student agendas to communicate positive happenings with parents. I am setting a goal to write at least one positive note in student agendas each hour, everyday. By the end of the week I will have written at least 25 positive notes in agendas. I will be sure to write in each student's agenda at least once a month. I can monitor that I have done this by placing a checkmark next to their name in my record book.
- Our district uses the Skyward® student information system. A component of this system is that parents can enroll in access which allows them to view real-time grades—the grades parents are able to see on-line are identical to the grades that I am able to see in my electronic grade book. Our building principal requires that our electronic grade books are updated at least once a week, each Wednesday (any deviation from this schedule must be communicated with parents).

- At the junior high in which I teach, teachers (and students) are organized into teams. Each team consists of an English language arts, math, science, and social studies teacher and we share a common group of 125 to 150 students. The team in which I work uses a Friday folder system. When I was first placed on this team of teachers I was quite against the use of Friday folders and thought of them to be rather elementary-ish. I have since changed my mind! Each Friday students obtain their Friday folder from their activity period teacher and carry it with them to each of their classes—providing teachers the opportunity to write grades, comments, etc. within it or place graded work or memos in it. Students then take the folder home for their parents to review over the weekend and return it, with a parent signature, to their activity period teacher on Monday. Our Friday folders contain a designated place for communication for each week of the school year. In the past my use of the Friday folder has been sporadic and limited. Beginning this school year I will make it a point to use the Friday folder for more positive communication. Each week I will write at least 5 positive notes per class in Friday folders. I will rotate through my class list, making sure to write a positive note in each student’s folder at least once a month. I will also make a point to write each student’s grade and missing assignments in the Friday folders every other week (for all parents, but specifically for parents who are unable to view their child’s grade via Skyward®). The following is a sample for the first week of school in the up-coming school year:

<b>September 10, 2010</b>				
<input type="checkbox"/> See enclosed graded work		<input type="checkbox"/> See enclosed progress report		
<input type="checkbox"/> See enclosed letter from: _____				
	<b>ELA</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>S.S.</b>
<b>Current Grade</b>				
<b># of Missing Assignments</b>				
Teacher / Parent Comments: _____				
_____				
_____				
_____				
Parent Signature* _____				
<small>*Parent signature indicates a parent has reviewed included papers &amp; student's agenda</small>				

- As many parents, especially parents of junior high students, find it difficult to “get information from their uncommunicative children about what happened during school” they are beginning to turn to other methods, such as class websites to obtain information about homework and classroom happenings (Merkley, Schmidt, Dirksen, & Fuhler, 2006, p. 12). I will maintain a class website to communicate with parents and students. The start of my class website can be found at: <http://teacherweb.com/MI/HoltJuniorHighSchool/MrsKilgore/>. Please note that the website currently does not contain all of the information I anticipate posting to it (we are in the middle of negotiating a contract and so much still lies unknown). Information that will be posted to the website includes a weekly class agenda (which will include daily homework assignments), the classroom behavior standards and consequences, a class calendar listing all important dates (class specific and school-wide), information “about the teacher”, my contact information, important class documents (I am still contemplating posting class handouts and notes on the website), etc. Parents and students alike will be able to subscribe to a “News Flash” in which I will send them each time an update is made to the weekly agenda and/or homework assignments.

## Management of Student Assignments

Let's face it...managing the work of nearly 150 students is no easy feat! I MUST put into place strategies that will help me “effectively manage student assignments without taking unreasonable amounts of time” while at the same time promoting “responsible student behavior regarding assigned tasks” (Sprick, 2009, p. 90). It is essential that students know that I “put a high value on completing work” (Sprick, 2009, p. 90). The following are methods that I will use to manage the volumes of student work that I must deal with:

- The agenda for each class period will be placed in a prominent location (the whiteboard) at the front of the class every day (Sterling, 2009, p. 30). Any homework assignments will have a star placed by them. Students in my classes are required to keep their own record of assigned homework in the agenda that the school provides them with on the first day of school (Sprick, 2009, p. 91). They are not required to write the entire board agenda in their student agenda—there simply isn't enough room for them. Instead, I require that they write down any items that are starred—usually the homework assignment. In the event that there is no homework assignment I write and star “NO HW”.
- I will set up a bin with hanging file folders for each hour to deal with students who are returning from absences. I will place a sign on the front of the bin—“Absent? What You Missed”. At the conclusion of each day I will place any handouts that were distributed in the bin for students who were absent. I will write their name on the handout and place it in the file folder that is for their hour. If multiple handouts are distributed, I will clip them together with a paperclip. In order to keep absent work separate from work which is incomplete, late, or missing, I will stamp each handout placed in the bin with my “Absent” stamp.
- In the event of upcoming tests, binder checks, and other long-term/long-range assignments I will write them on the board, as well as setting aside a few minutes during the class period to have students record them in their agendas—both on their monthly calendar and their weekly agenda (Sprick, 2009, p. 92).

- Students in my science class will be required to keep all assignments for science class in a separate binder just for science class. Science binders will be organized according to a table of contents and each item in the binder will be assigned a binder identification number (BIN), which will be recorded on the table of contents and in the upper right-hand corner of each item. Binders will be graded via an in-class binder checks that will occur 3 times each trimester. A sample binder, that I will maintain, will be available for students to use in the event that they need to organize their binder.
- At the beginning of the hour on days which homework assignments are due I will complete a homework check. I will walk around the class, to each student's desk, checking to see that students have completed the assigned work. If a student has the assignment, but it is not complete I will stamp both their paper and their student agenda (for parents to see) with my "Incomplete Assignment" stamp. If a student's assignment is missing (they don't have the paper at all) I will stamp their student agenda with my "Missing Assignment" stamp. I am also considering having students fill-out a "No Assignment Slip" (it would be a combination of the "Zero Slip" and "No Assignment Form" on pages 98 and 99 of the CHAMPS text) that would be returned to them when they turn the assignment in to me.
- Late Work Policy—I will accept late work up until one week before the end of each trimester, with a small penalty. Each assignment that a student submits late will be deducted 11% (points are deducted thereafter for being incorrect). When an assignment is turned in late it will be stamped with my "LATE (-11%)" stamp.
- Student grades will be recorded in a paper (hard copy) grade book and in an electronic grade book that is visible to parents. Grades will be updated at least once a week (every Wednesday).

## Grouping Students

I have never incorporated much small-group or cooperative learning group work into my instruction—my primary grouping of students has been to complete lab activities. Through this course and another course that I took this summer I was reminded that “small-group work is important for student learning” (Sterling, 2009, p. 29). Beginning this year, it is my intent to implement much more collaborative learning into my instruction. In order for student to achieve through cooperative learning activities I must promote positive relationships amongst peers (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 102). To foster relationship building amongst my students I will start the school year with students completing an acquaintance activity:

- Students will choose one of three formats for their acquaintance project:
  - Pieces of Me: Students will be provided a handout that contains 5 puzzle pieces—one that they add their name to and 4 in which they must illustrate something about themselves.
  - Fabulous Flags: Students will create a personal flag that illustrates 4 things about themselves.
  - Designer T-shirts: Students will be provided an outline of a t-shirt (front and back) on which they must illustrate at least 4 things about themselves.

Essentially each of these 3 formats requires the student to do the same thing, but offers them the choice of format. Students will cut out their puzzle pieces, flags, or t-shirts and adhere them to their choice of colored paper. Each student in the class will then informally present 1 or 2 elements from their puzzle, flag, or t-shirt to the entire class (so that students can get to know one another) before they are hung on the walls and from the ceiling for the first several weeks of school (I like to have them hanging before back-to-school night so that students can share them with their parents).

- I very much like the idea of grouping students into “base groups” as suggested in the CHAMPS text (pp. 118-119). After students have had the opportunity to get to know each other through the

activity described above I will ask students to submit a list of 3 to 4 students in the classroom they would like to work with and one student in the room that they prefer not to work with. I will use these lists to place students into “base groups”—I have no intention of placing each student in a group with more than 1 of the students they indicated that they would like to work with and I will do my best to keep students from working with the student they listed as one that they prefer not to work with (provided their reasoning is reasonable). “Base groups” will be used in a multitude of ways—students can seek help from their “base group” when they have been absent and need assistance, peer tutoring, study groups for upcoming tests, portfolio work, goal setting and monitoring, lab activity groups, etc. Students will be assigned to new “base groups” at the change of each trimester.

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