

Comprehensive Classroom Ecology System Plan

Designed for a preschool classroom in a public school
setting

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Personal Teaching Theory Of Classroom Management

Effective classroom management is having an environment and teaching strategies set up that help children be successful in their learning, while supporting their well-being. It is important to build students' agency and autonomy while providing clear boundaries and structure for them. There needs to be a behavior plan created at the beginning of the school year, so that teachers can follow their plan instead of acting reactively to disruptive behaviors. Classrooms need to honor each students' individual culture and self, while creating a strong classroom community. Teachers need to meet students where they are at academically and with their social emotional skills, and build on from there. Administrators, families, and teachers are all a part of a child's team. Communication and collaboration are key for a student to be successful and enjoy learning.





Classroom Environment

Important components of the classroom environment include:

- Easy maneuverability for all students
- Different seating options- chairs, carpet, rocking chairs, wobble cushions
- Different seating arrangements for activities (carpet versus table time)
- Louder centers away from calmer centers (block center away from library center)
- Calmer lighting- dimmer switches, warm light, light covers
- Organized furniture and materials
- Visual signs for centers, toys, and classroom materials
- Calm down area accessible for students at all times



Preschool Classroom

Layout



This is not a picture of my actual classroom, but some key components that are similar to my room include:

- The reading area far away from blocks
- Carpet and chairs/tables for sitting
- Having defined spaces for each center

Other components of a preschool classroom that are not in this picture include:

- A calm down area
- Other centers such as art, math/manipulatives, writing/literacy, sensory bin (it does look like there might be one in their science area)





Calm Down Area

The Calm Down Area, or sometimes called the Safe Space, is an essential part of an early childhood classroom. This is a defined space where children can go if they are feeling any type of emotion that they do not feel comfortable being around others, or if their body is out of control. Students can decide to go to the area or a teacher might suggest that they go there. If students are feeling sad, mad, overstimulated, frustrated, etc. this is a space where they can work on understanding their feelings and calming down their mind and body. In some classrooms there is a tent set up or something up to help the student feel like they are in their own space without anyone too close. There are often pictures on the wall or books about emotions and calm down strategies and tools available. Some tools that can be helpful include a mirror to see the emotion on their face, a fidget to squeeze if they are frustrated or angry, a stuffed animal to hug, a glitter bottle to put their focus on something calm, or headphones and calming music.



Image from:
<https://pocketofpreschool.com/safe-place-or-cozy-corner-for-little-learners/>



Preschool Daily Schedule

- 9:00-9:30** Breakfast & independent literacy activities
- 9:30-9:50** Circle Time (greeting, morning message, read aloud #1)
- 9:50-10:25** Centers (free play)
- 10:30-11:05** Small Group Rotations (literacy, journal/art, playdough/fine motor)
- 11:05-11:15** Bathroom
- 11:15-11:35** Lunch
- 11:40-12:10** Recess
- 12:20-1:00** Rest Time
- 1:00-1:15** Circle Time (Letter of the Day- carpet & table time)
- 1:15-2:05** Centers/Pull for Small Group (math)
- 2:10-2:20** Circle Time (Heggerty Phonemic Awareness)
- 2:20-2:30** Bathroom
- 2:30-3:00** Recess
- 3:10-3:25** Snack
- 3:25-3:40** Circle Time (read aloud #2, Question of the Day counting)

The schedule is flexible since sometimes activities take more or less time than planned for. Sometimes activities such as phonemic awareness or read alouds are taken away if students just need a break for extra movement or play!

The daily schedule posted in the classroom has pictures next to it so that students know what is next without knowing how to read.



Procedures

Arrival Routine: Students hang up backpacks, turn in their take-home folders, put lunch boxes in basket, and answer the Question of the Day using their name card.

Center Time : Students use jumbo size popsicle sticks with their name on them to choose a center. At each center there is a laminated paper with the name of the center, a picture of the center, and a pocket with a number on it for how many people can play at the center at a time. Students put their popsicle stick into the pocket when they want to play at a center. Before they leave a center they must clean up their mess and take their popsicle stick with them to choose a new center.

Small Group Rotations : Students are divided into three groups. The groups change depending on the type of activity that is at the teacher table. Students are sometimes divided into groups based on their academic level for a specific learning domain- such as literacy, math, or fine motor. This gives me an opportunity to differentiate the activity based on where the students are at academically. Other times students are in mixed grouping to allow for students to work together and learn from each other. Students start at the fine motor table, teacher table, or the art/journal table with the paraprofessional. They are at each table for about 8-10 minutes and then they rotate to the next.





Procedures Continued

Lining Up: Students are called by name to line up on colored squares on the classroom floor. This helps students take their time to use safe, walking feet and a calm body to get in line.

Student Jobs : Students are assigned a classroom job every other week to help contribute to the classroom. Some example of jobs are snack helper (passes out juice at snack time), librarian (collects books after literacy time and neatly puts the books on the shelf), and line leader (leads the students in the hallway to go the bathroom, cafeteria, and recess).

Rest Time : When students come in from first recess they get a drink of water from their water bottle, get out their blanket and stuffy from their cubby, and go to their mats. They can take off their shoes if they choose to and cover up with a blanket. They need to be calm, quiet, and stay on their mats during rest time.

Dismissal: Students are called by name to touch the Letter of the Day and name it, then they go to their cubby to get on their coat and backpack before getting into line. Students who are picked up go with the paraprofessional and students who ride the bus go with the classroom teacher.





Whole School & Classroom Expectations

Whole School Expectations

- **Be Respectful** (use kind words, follow directions, keep hands to yourself, use an inside voice, use appropriate language)
- **Be Responsible** (clean up messes, be honest)
- **Be Safe** (keep hands to yourself, use materials and tools appropriately, be safe on furniture and equipment)

Circle Time Expectations

- **Eyes and ears on the speaker**
- **A quiet mouth when others are talking**
- **Calm body**

Small Group Expectations

- **Follow directions**
- **Try your best**

At the beginning of the school year, students help brainstorm expectations. Since they are so young, the teacher can give some clues to help them figure out expectations and put them into simple phrases for the children to understand, with visuals next to them.

Instructional Strategies

- Play-based learning
- Diverse teaching strategies: visual, auditory, modeling, and hands-on
- Engagement with families and the community
- Large group & small group
- Strategic small group groupings
- One-on-one to work on skills that they are struggling with
- Culturally responsive- recognize & value diversity in the classroom
- Ongoing assessments to tailor teaching



It is important to include hands-on activities for all groups, but especially the youngest of learners. Preschool-aged children learn best through play! Their brains are rapidly developing and we want to encourage a love of learning. This is why we want to make activities fun and engaging!

Free play (center time) children get the opportunity to grow their skills such as social skills, problem-solving, building their fine and gross motor skills, language development, and academic skills.

Small group & large group time can be an opportunity to build more concrete academic skills through modeling and hands-on activities.





Responsive Strategies

Teaching Expectations, Routines, & Procedures

The beginning of the school year is an essential time to teach expectations, routines, and procedures by modeling to the students and having them practice MANY TIMES! The first couple of weeks of the school year focuses on building classroom community and learning the expectations, routines, and procedures to set everyone up for success. It is important to give students praise and encouragement when they are following the classroom routines and expectations.

The expectations are created with the students at the beginning of the school year. Since they are so young and may have never been in a structured setting before, the teacher might need to help give the students ideas. All the expectations are worded in a positive, child-friendly way with visuals to support the words. Expectations and the daily schedule have visuals by them and are clearly posted in the classroom for daily review.





Responsive Strategies Continued

Dealing with Unexpected Behaviors

When a student does an unexpected behavior, I like to use a Restorative Justice approach to deal with the situation. Restorative Justice focuses on the harm that was done, the impact of the action, and repairing the relationship. Instead of putting focus on punishing the person who caused harm, Restorative Justice focuses on figuring out why it happened and how to make things better for the future. Preschool aged children do not have a fully developed brain yet, and often lack much social experience. They are still learning how to self-regulate, share, understand their emotions, and many other social emotional skills. To help them learn these skills they need models and practice.

When a student does not comply, I will use a calm manner and ask them why they are where they are if they are not with the class physically, or ask them what happened if it was an issue with another student. If another student was involved, I will figure out who and how someone was harmed, I will help the student understand the impact of their action, and help them build their relationship with their peer.



Teacher Self-Regulation

Teacher self regulation is very important to be able to teach children. Working in a school system is emotionally tolling because of the variety of emotions that we experience throughout a school day. If we are doing our job right, students trust us and have strong relationships with us. This means that they will tell us things that put an emotional toll on us because it can be heavy information to process. We empathize with them and try our best to help support them. We also experience times of frustration and anger when students are doing unexpected behaviors. It is important to regulate our emotions so that we can focus on teaching our students. If we engage in getting lost in our sad, mad, and/or frustrating feelings, we can't help our students. It is great to be transparent about HOW we are feeling, if it is appropriate, but we need to watch what actions, tones, and body language go along with sharing this information. When we feel frustrated it can be turned into a learning experience for our students. You can tell the class that you are feeling frustrated and tell them that you need to take some deep breaths. Then, in front of the class, take the deep breaths and count them out loud. The next time that a student is feeling frustrated you can bring up how you dealt with the last time in front of them.





Teacher Self-Regulation Continued



It is important to remember that children's brains are not fully developed. They are not trying to make us mad. They simply do not have the skills yet to self-regulate. The best thing that we can do is to help teach them the skills through modeling and practice. We can help them learn that it's okay to feel other emotions besides just happy. It is normal! Many teachers were not taught this as a child which makes it difficult for us to self-regulate now. Having a Calm Down Area or a Safe Space in the classroom can be a very helpful tool for helping students regulate. Also having specific social emotional lessons can help students with explicitly teaching them about emotions. For preschool, there are social emotional curriculums that can be purchased and followed.

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