

Running Head: ENVIRONMENT AND BEHAVIOR

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Learning Environment and Classroom Behavior Techniques

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Saphier, et al. (2008) discuss in their book, *The Skillful Teacher*, that a thoroughly planned out and implemented classroom management plan will create a positive learning environment that is conducive to the most effective learning. Jumping off from this, I believe that a safe, consistent, and positive learning environment and management system will also curb most behavioral issues. In fact, I believe that a student's behavior in a classroom is more often than not a direct result of the learning environment and management system. Saphier, et al. discusses several aspects of an effective management system including attention, momentum, space, time, routines, and discipline. I believe that all of these are vital, and, above all else, I believe that respect in the classroom creates the most effective learning environments and is also the most effective behavioral technique.

First, I believe that respect and a consistent management system creates the most effective learning environments. I strive very hard to create a learning environment in my classroom where my students feel positive, safe, and, most importantly, respected. I realized early on that people, whether they be students, teachers, or anyone else, learns and are engaged to the best of their ability when they feel respected in their environment, when they feel a part of what they are learning or doing. As a teacher, I believe that I am not a dictator in my classroom, nor am I a simple conduit of knowledge for my students. Instead, I try to show my students the same respect that I expect from them as I endeavor to teach them. I find that I learn just as much from my students as I hope they do from me and, as we learn together, I try as hard as I can to constantly involve them in the processes of learning so that they feel a part of what we do and take ownership of our learning. I try and show my students respect by creating classroom rules together, grading

systems together, and creating assignments together. Even though respect is at the heart of my management system, I, of course, value other aspects of an effective learning environment that Saphier, et al. (2008) discusses. I use a variety of strategies to hold attention such as engaging my students in hands on activities. I keep momentum going in the classroom by planning for transitions and rolling with disruptions. I utilize the space of my classroom by giving my students their own stations to do their production work and by never hiding behind my desk during class. I try and keep a proper rhythm and pacing to my lessons, while also implementing consistent routines. Lastly, I try and avoid any severe discipline problems by effectively utilizing the above-mentioned strategies, but when discipline does become an issue, I, again, face it in a respectful and mature manner. I have found that discipline is rarely an issue in my classroom because I am consistent with my management system.

Next, I believe that respect and a consistent management system are the most effective behavioral technique. As I mentioned earlier, an effective and consistent management plan creates an effective learning environment. When respect is added into this system, I have found that negative behavioral issues in my classroom are not an issue. Respect not only means treating my students as I wish to be treated (likewise for one another), it also means that I have to have an understanding of where my students are coming from and having an inherent respect for their unique perspective. I have found that many negative behavioral issues surface when a student feels powerless or voiceless in the classroom, where they feel they are just expected to do what they are told with no chance for input. Thus, the students feel disrespected. I am not saying I let my students take over my class. On the contrary, I always establish my rules and my expectations

early on (many of which come out of my management plan), yet I also understand that, especially when it comes to my content area of production, my students all have a unique perspective and have something special to contribute. I want them to feel that not only myself, but the rest of the class has enough respect to value one another's opinions, input, and contributions to our lessons and projects. And it is in this way that, combined with my management plan, my students are more often than not engaged and learning, leaving no time for behavioral issues.

Respect lends itself to all areas of effective learning. Without a respectful learning environment students would not feel safe or comfortable. When young people (myself included) feel that they are being forced to do something without a voice or a chance to give their own input, they often show negative behavior. This can present itself in the forms acting out or tuning out and not paying attention – thus not learning. I believe that a respectful and consistent management plan creates an effective learning environment where behavioral issues take care of themselves.

## References

Saphier, J., Haley-Speca, M. A., Gower, R. (2008). *The skillful teacher: Building your teaching skills*. Acton: Research for Better Teaching, Inc.