

A Discussion of my Approach to Classroom Management

As a high school choral studies teacher, it is important that I manage my classroom in a way that fosters productive learning experiences through a positive classroom climate. It is important that I teach behavioral expectations, give supportive feedback, redirect nondisruptive off-task behavior, and firmly and consistently use corrective actions when disruptive behavior arises. The educational goal that classrooms will be structured and managed in a way that fosters productive learning experiences is important because as a teacher I will want to help my students reach their potential – academically, personally, and socially. Good classroom management is essential to achieve that goal.

One strategy I would use to accomplish this goal is to distribute a printed “chorus contract” at the beginning of the year. I would list the course objectives (for example, “To establish a strong singing technique”). The contract would list the required texts and materials to be used throughout the year. For example, my students will be required to bring two pencils and manuscript paper to each class session. The contract would also list the classroom rules and expectations (for example, “No gum chewing” and “No food or drinks, except water”). In addition, the contract will clearly explain the class policy on attendance and how student work is to be evaluated. The bottom of the form would include spaces for the student’s name, the student’s signature, and the parent or guardian’s name and signature. I would assess the “no gum chewing” rule through teacher observation. I could modify my strategy by placing a trash can in the front of the room labeled “DEPOSIT YOUR CHEWING GUM HERE.” In addition, I would write down which students had to be continually reminded.

This strategy would be effective in achieving the educational goal because it states the expectations for behavior in way a straightforward manner. In addition, the contract acts as a physically tangible document to which both teacher and student can refer. Most importantly, having a chorus contract respects the adolescent's growing sense of autonomy.

When students come to class they bring both excitement and emotional baggage. If the class appears to be in a "hyper" mood, I might begin with a series of deep diaphragmatic breathing exercises. I would instruct the students to take a deep belly breath and hold it for ten seconds. After the students exhale I would direct them to repeat the task, this time holding their breath for fifteen seconds. Finally, I would have them hold their breaths for twenty seconds. This is an effective strategy because holding the breath increases the level of carbon dioxide in the blood and thus has a calming effect.

For more typical situations, I could start the warm-up part of the lesson by having the students sing a single pitch on a neutral syllable just as soon as the bell stops ringing. I could then direct the students to hold this pitch for about ten seconds and allow everyone to settle in. The procedure would be repeated for other vowel sounds. Again, this strategy is effective because it focuses the students' attention and signifies clearly that the rehearsal has started.

Another strategy I would use to achieve this educational goal would be to neutralize any excessive noise or chatter in the room. If the noise level seems to be increasing, I would allow three or four seconds of silence to take place in the room. I would allow the students hear the silence. If a student calls out of turn I would say "Raise your hand. And when I call on you, speak." Furthermore, I would arrange to have a one-

on-one conference with a student who talks excessively during a rehearsal. During the conference I would ask “What can I expect from you?” Then I would write the conference up for my records. When the behavior improves, I would praise the student in very specific terms, for example, “I was pleased that you did not talk loudly when we changed pieces.” As a follow-up activity, I could have the student write an entry in his/her journal about the importance of having rules. For students who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, I would consult with the special education teacher and work with him or her to determine appropriate modifications to the student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Neutralizing excessive talking allows the students to learn in a calm, productive environment. When students notice that the teacher is suddenly remaining silent, they understand that the noise level has become unacceptable. This is a far better strategy than sneering and saying “I’m waiting.” Reminding students that they need to raise their hands in order to speak lets them know that I value what each individual has to say. Using journal entries and role-playing activities allows students to think critically about the consequences of their actions instead of simply obeying regulations passively. In a one-on-one conference all kinds of things come out. The student does not lose face in front of his or her peers, and a toe-to-toe confrontation is avoided.

For the most unruly students, a five-step intervention plan may become necessary.¹ This strategy is effective because the teacher is able to demonstrate to students, parents, and administrators that the misbehaving student was given ample opportunities to correct his/her behavior.

¹ Adapted from *Classroom Management for Secondary Teachers* (p.181), by E. Emmer, C. Evertson, and M Worsham, 2000, Boston, MA:Allyn & Bacon. Copyright 2000 by Allyn and Bacon.

TABLE 1. FIVE-STEP INTERVENTION PLAN		
Step	Procedure	Example
1.	Non-verbal cue	Raised index finger
2.	Verbal Cue	“Steve, please follow our classroom rules and our plans for creating an enjoyable music classroom.”
3.	Indicate <i>choice</i> student is making	“Steve, if you continue to talk while I am talking, you will be choosing to go to the back of the room and develop a plan to appropriately modify your behavior.”
4.	Student moves to a designated area to develop a plan for behaving appropriately.	“Steve, you have chosen to go to the back of the room to develop a plan to modify your behavior”.
5.	Student is required to go somewhere else to develop a plan for behaving appropriately.	“Steve, because you are choosing not to be responsible, you will have to see Mrs. Johnson to develop your plan.

Conferring with colleagues in the professional environment is an additional effective way to handle behavior problems. If a student is continually disturbing my class, other teachers are most likely having difficulties with him/her as well. Having the support of colleagues is useful to administrators for determining the grounds for a principal or a superintendent suspension (for example, if the student brings a weapon into the classroom).

Name of High School:
Name of Principal:
Name of Assistant Principal

Music Department
Choral Instructor:
Mr. Adam Rosenbloom

CHORUS CONTRACT AND SYLLABUS

Course Objectives:

1. To establish a strong singing technique, develop ear-training skills and understand musical notation and terms.
2. To conceptualize the harmonic and contrapuntal relationships in choral music.
3. To utilize critical thinking skills in choral music activities.
4. To understand choral music in relation to language, culture, and history.

Text and Materials:

1. Choral music journal (small looseleaf binder).
2. Two pencils (to be bought to every rehearsal).
3. Textbook: Essential Musicianship: A Comprehensive Choral Method (Crocker/Leavitt)
4. Choral music folder and vocal handouts (TBA)

Classroom Rules and Expectations:

1. Be courteous, respectful, and responsible during all activities.
2. Do not bring food or drinks into the classroom, except for water.
3. Do not chew gum during class.
4. Do not use cell-phones, beepers, or any other electronic devices during class time.
5. Listen attentively to rehearsal directions.
6. All students must stop singing right at the conductor's signal and then observe silence.
7. Treat music, folders, and equipment with care.
8. Put materials away at the end of class.

Course Requirements:

1. **Class participation:** It is extremely important for you to be in class. Your daily participation will be graded and recorded.
2. **Attendance and Lateness:** Everyone has an important function and your prompt attendance is required. Please be in your seats with your required materials at hand by the time that the late bell rings. If you are late there will be a sign-in sheet. **This will be documented and reflected in your grade.**

Evaluation:

1. Daily Classwork (includes bringing required texts and materials)
 2. Individual vocal performance self-evaluations and journal entries (i.e. reflection on your pitch accuracy)
 3. Recorded ensemble rehearsal comparison and journal entries.
 4. Theory and ear-training assignments
 5. Participation in concerts and other events
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Student's Name: _____ Date: _____

Student's Signature: _____ Period: _____

Parent's Name and Signature: _____

Microsoft Office Online Forms

Insert Name of School Here

STUDENT DISCIPLINARY ACTION

STUDENT **ID#**
NAME: _____

GRADE: _____

INFRACTION:

Date:	
Time:	
Location:	

DESCRIPTION:

DISCIPLINARY ACTION TAKEN:

TEACHER:		DATE:	
STUDENT:		DATE:	
PARENT:		DATE:	
DISCIPLINARY AGENT:		DATE:	

Form Letter to Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

[School Street Address]
[City, ST ZIP Code]

March 4, 2004

[Recipient Name]
[Street Address]
[City, ST ZIP Code]

Dear [Recipient Name]:

I am writing to inform you that I am having some behavioral problems with [Child Name]. I would greatly appreciate your cooperation in working with me to resolve these issues.

In order to keep the class productive and calm, it is essential that each child in my classroom avoid certain behaviors. I've checked the problem areas for your child below. [Child Name] must improve in these areas to develop his/her full potential.

- _____ Excessive talking
- _____ Lack of effort
- _____ Lack of attention
- _____ Disrespectfulness to others
- _____ Incomplete or late assignments
- _____ Missing assignments
- _____ Poor test scores
- _____ Excessive detentions

I would like to meet with you as soon as possible to discuss these problems and how we can help [Child Name] resolve them.

Sincerely,

**Adam F. Rosenbloom
Music Department**

