

Philosophical Statement

I believe that culturally responsive, social justice oriented teaching brings with it two critical, but often divergent, challenges: preparing students for success in the world as it is, and empowering students to help transform that world for the better. These dual challenges weigh heavily on me as I develop my classroom management philosophy. While my ideal classroom would be rooted in the democratic and dialogical approach of Paolo Freire, using the more student-centered classroom management strategies of relationship/listening and confront/contract, I must remember that we don't live in an ideal world. To teach my students otherwise would be unfair. As Lisa Delpit argues, we live in a culture of power, and teachers should explicitly prepare students to participate in that culture—which makes warmly implemented strategies of rules/consequences (or structures/supports) also useful. My goal, then, is to build a classroom management approach that can openly meet my students from within the *culture of power* and support them there, and then build with them toward a *culture of community* that uses higher-level social skills and values.

The philosophy that has emerged from this is an evolving hybrid approach, that begins with key rules/consequences ideas of Morrish, Jones, and Lemov, and which then explicitly, meta-cognitively moves students toward more student-centered, confront/contract and relationship/listening ideas of Marshall, Glasser, and Kohn as the year progresses. Just as the content and academic skills of a class dynamically evolve over a year, so can the social skills, classroom rules and roles, and even the classroom layout. As I open by teaching the skills of the culture of power, my authority and expectations will be at the center, providing a foundation of structure, consistency, and basic safety. But as I then push students to build an ever stronger culture of community, our classroom roles will shift, making us all into teacher-students and student-teachers, participating democratically together.

Preventive Strategies

- I will open the class with a candid acknowledgment of the injustices that young people face in schools and society. In an urgent and hopeful tone (Bailey), I will establish the need for change, and my expectation that students become the next generation of community leaders. I will then explain my philosophy of learning the necessary survival skills for a culture of power, and but also the skills to build a new culture of community.
- The first two weeks will be a sort of training camp (Morrish), with three primary goals:

Note about Morrish: Although Morrish's ideas may seem antithetical to a democratic classroom, I see a lot of solid ideas about how students enter school, and the supports they need to become democratic participants. However, I believe that these needs stem from a culture that systematically dis-empowers and infantilizes youth, not because of inherent deficits. I actually prefer Morrish's blunt approach to Jones' use of incentives.

- 1) Begin to build trusting relationships (icebreaker games and trust-building exercises)
 - 2) Explore questions of power and diversity—core themes of both the classroom culture *and* academic content in both social studies and ELL classes—while teaching about my *culture of power/culture of community* philosophy (personal timelines, student survey, social power diagrams, vote with your feet, Theater of the Oppressed)
 - 3) Establish and practice the teacher-driven procedures and expectations with which we will begin the year—including entering and leaving, courtesy, raising hands, attentive listening, orderly transitions, resolving conflict, etc. (Morrish, Wong, Jones)
- Because I believe academic engagement is critical (Glasser, Marshall, Jones), I will seek to have a well-paced, participatory class that uses multiple intelligences and teaching techniques (direct instruction, cooperative learning, theater, Storypath and other constructivist methods). Even though I am beginning with teacher-centered *classroom management*, I plan to use student-centered *instruction* from the beginning, with the goal of first developing student responsibility and community through the academic sphere, and then transitioning those skills into classroom democracy over time.
 - I will strive to maintain a warm, humorous, and candid attitude with all students, offering regular, authentic praise (Bridget's 4-1 ratio) as they practice social and academic skills.
 - We will have bi-weekly 15-30 minute class meetings (Kohn). At first, meetings will be openly teacher-driven, with assessments of class progress on academic and social goals. But as students demonstrate skills, they will have increasing opportunities for student input, facilitation, and voting on proposals as the year continues. My hope is that, by mid-year, students will be ready to manage these meetings with little teacher direction.
 - Students will sit at individual desks in a large, inward facing U-shape. However, I will teach quick transition procedures for changing between rows, 3-4 desk clusters, and the U-shape.
 - The room will have a table for students to pick up the day's handouts on entry, and a filing cabinet for all previous handouts. Students will tidy up the room before leaving each day.
 - The walls will have areas explicitly labeled and reserved for classroom expectations and procedures, teacher-generated decorations and information, student work and ideas, and community news and opportunities. There will also be a "progress wall" where we will monitor class efforts to build a culture of community, with a dynamic skills rubric (see attached), agendas, notes, and proposals from class meetings.

- Before the school year starts, I will send a letter home, with a parent survey included, and with a follow-up phone call within the first two weeks of school. This communication will lay out my basic philosophy and expectations for the class, and my availability for visits, correspondence, and off-campus meetings. It will also ask about preferred communication methods, parental hopes for their children, what they want me to know, and linguistic needs.
- I will follow up my first home letter with at least 3 positive postcards home per student per year (using Bridget’s pre-addressed postcard system).
- At first, students will have few to no choices about procedures or classroom rules, and I will never tell them they have power when they really don't (Morrish). However, ideally within weeks, I will offer more choices for responsible community participation (Marshall). Through increasingly student-led classroom meetings, even drastic changes will be up for discussion (calling me by my first name, swearing, student-chosen units, even replacing the desks with couches if students help with the moving). All of these discussions will directly reference our building of a new culture of community from a traditional culture of power.
- Occasionally, with plenty of notice, we will have “Dress For Power” days, where students must dress and talk professionally, with financial support for low-income students (Delpit).

Supportive Strategies

- I will use an instrument, song, or call-and-response (first my choice, eventually student choice) to get class attention. I will follow with a steady, strong, courteous voice, using wait time and same-volume repetition if necessary. I will not talk over students (Lemov, Jones).
- I will regularly praise students who demonstrate responsible behaviors, thus sending signals to off-task students (Marshall, Skinner).
- I will use proximity and place my fingers on the desks of students who are off-task (Jones).
- I will quickly, silently confiscate disruptive items (e.g. electronics), for retrieval at class end.
- I will explicitly teach all of these strategies at the beginning of the year, with visuals and reminders. I will then check in about these at class meetings, and eventually many will be up for debate and change through class discussion and vote.

Corrective Strategies

My corrective strategies are inspired by Marshall’s ideas. However, I will begin with less choice, because of Morrish’s ideas about students learning skills before choice can work—*not* because they are self-centered and immature, but because they have internalized youth oppression.

- 1) If during individual or group work time, I will quietly, warmly approach the student and ask them what level of responsibility they are showing (Marshall), and I will tell them what level I expect. If during a full-class activity, I will calmly remind them that their behavior is going against class expectations, and I will have them repeat using expected behavior. In both cases, the interaction should end with the student practicing desired behavior (Morrish).
- 2) If the student doesn't self-correct the behavior, then I will tell them to either stay after class or wait for me in the hall (depending on the level of disruption). There I will ask again what level of responsibility they were showing, I will ask what their goals were (Glasser), and then I will expect them to write about the consequences of their behavior and how they could change it (Marshall's Acknowledgment, Choice, Commitment—but at first choices would be narrow and teacher-created).
- 3) If the student still doesn't self-correct, then I will use self-diagnostic referrals to home or the main office, where students themselves write the referral explaining what they did and what could be done differently (Marshall). At first, this will be highly guided (Morrish), but I will work to quickly move it toward a student-centered approach. This will then lead to an office or family meeting, where interventions beyond my classroom may be necessary.

Creating An Inclusive Classroom Community

I have attempted to put cultural responsiveness and inclusion at the center of my plan. By demystifying traditional school and professional behavior as actually being very specific to a dominant culture, and then by directly teaching that culture of power, I create a structured environment for students of all backgrounds to learn the behavior. This also honors students' home cultures as valid and dignified (Curwin & Mendler). Similarly, recognizing that not all students feel equally entitled to voice, power, and democracy, I directly teach those skills so that the same, already empowered students aren't always dominating class processes.

Here are other inclusion strategies that I am planning:

- For students coming from chaotic lives, I recognize the danger of having dynamically shifting classroom structures and rules (Lewis & Doorlag). This is why we are starting with a highly teacher-directed foundation, and why any changes will only happen at bi-weekly class meetings, with clear visuals, checks for understanding, and guided practice so that all students are clear about how we're evolving the classroom. Students who are more comfortable staying compliant with teacher direction will always have that option.

- I will open the class by teaching about cultural diversity, LGBT and trans-inclusive language, and the need for building a community that recognizes multiple ability types.
- I will maintain a clear policy against use of oppressive language, with immediate and courteous correction that asks students to repeat their point using different words (Morrish).
- I will accompany all expectations and processes with visuals and clear text, so that students have reference points and multiple ways to process information.
- I will open the class with student surveys and life stories—to learn the individual needs, interests, and pet peeves of my students. I will also use database software to monitor and update my knowledge and document my interactions with students.
- I will utilize peer coaching to check for micro-aggressions and full application of my values.

Classroom Values and Rules

These are overarching values that I hope to maintain for the entire year, though the specific rules and procedures will shift as the process evolves. In the first two weeks, I will explain and discuss these using a beginner-level Socratic seminar format and embodied roleplay.

Class Values	What It Looks Like In Class
We are building something meaningful here	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust the teacher, trust the process. Your conscious compliance with procedures will make this class work at its best. • Use this class as your tool. Everything we do has a purpose. If you're bored, try approaching it from a different angle. I guarantee you'll find something useful.
Our strength comes from each of us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need you at your best! Be present, physically and mentally. Show up on time, sober, and ready to learn with necessary materials. • Each of us matters. Honor each other, listen attentively to each other's ideas, support each other through the hard stuff, and respect each other's property.
We are always growing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect to make mistakes, and prepare to learn from them. This class is here to have your back while you try things out. • Hold the teacher accountable, hold yourself accountable. Your actions have consequences for all of us, and mine do to. Be honest about where you can grow.