

ABC Game of New Beginnings

The objective of weaving the classroom management plan throughout the day and emphasizing character development at worship daily is to help each student develop such a comfortable relationship with God, and an understanding of their identity in Him, that they are comfortable being kind and good to one another.

For further information, contact Brendia Bennett, teacher, principal

bbennett@txsda.org or brendiabennett@gmail.com

Hill Country Adventist School

Kerrville, TX 78003

Introduction

As any experienced teacher knows, having a classroom management plan is vital to the success of the school year. After teaching for thirty plus years, I once again found the need to adapt my plan.

Over the years, I have used a variety of plans including Assertive Discipline and aspects of the REACH program. I do like the Light Skills segment of the REACH Program, and it can be incorporated into my plan.

More and more of our students have special needs of one type or another: ADD, ADHD, dyslexia, autism, and a new one for me, extrasensory perception disorder. The student I had in my class last year was highly intelligent, very concrete, argumentative, and angry, but also extremely goal-oriented.

After 2 or 3 weeks last school year with this child holding me and the other students hostage to his outbursts, I prayed and with God's help, came up with the game of New Beginnings.

What I wanted was something that was inexpensive, simple, and not time-consuming.

Administration of the Game and Helpful Tips:

School starts at 8:00am. My classroom is designed so that students come in, put away backpacks, lunch boxes etc. and start immediately on their DOL (a part of the Pathways reading program), library book, or other assignment that is preplanned for them. I intentionally do not start worship at 8:00am. This allows late comers to settle down to work and eliminates interruptions during worship which starts at 8:20am.

During the 15 to 20 minutes students are completing their morning work, I have time to take attendance, and distribute tickets students earned the day before. Establish this routine early or you will forget to hand the cards out. It is vital to never take back a card that was earned.

The easiest way to keep track of the day is to list student names on the board, and just make a small mark next to the name as necessary. Other options are to keep a list of students slipped inside a sheet protector, use erasable marker to make marks which can be erased daily or use small sticky notes placed on the students desk to indicate marks.

A casual classroom observer may not realize that the teacher's classroom management plan has many facets, and is skillfully woven throughout the daily activities and curriculum. In addition to the basic plan, you will either need to explain thoroughly the meaning of the word respect or develop a subset of specific rules you expect students to follow. In my classroom, we discussed respect and how it would look in action. We did role plays of situations that could arise. How to: respond to another student who asks to borrow paper, pencils or other school supplies; answer the teacher or another student politely. How to: line up for recess, PE, at the water fountain. In addition to role plays, you might have students write skits and use them with a puppet theatre. In other words, have a procedure for all activities. Some things that seem common sense to us as adults are not that way to students.

Explain your expectations, other teachers may have had different expectations and a student may be genuinely puzzled about expectations.

The Faith Factor:

The best investment of time you can make at the beginning of the year is to choose worship topics devoted to character issues and allow time for class discussion. I choose a scripture to fit the topic we are addressing. Students write the scripture in their journal on Mondays. Some days, we simply read the text together; other days I have them respond to the text by explaining how this relates to them. They may describe a time when this verse helped them, or a time when it would have helped had they known about it. Sometimes when an incident occurs on the playground, we get out our journals and find a text that we can apply to the situation. In this way, scripture becomes connected to the daily lives of students.

Sometimes for Writer's Workshop, students are challenged to find a Bible character or story that illustrates the principle we are working on. Excellent topics which are real issues for students are: lying, cheating, anger, deception, conflict. To you it may seem negative, but there are examples of all of these events in the Bible and these are issues that disturb our students. The Light Skills segment in the REACH manual has characteristics based on the Fruit of the Spirit. One "light" skill is focused on each week. A classroom bulletin board is utilized to emphasize the various skills and the Fruits of the Spirit.

Students also learn to use the Bible Concordance through these exercises.

Adjustments:

The number of cards necessary to participate in the Citizenship party can be adjusted. This year, since I will be using the game for the entire year, I will require students to earn 16 large cards in order to receive recognition at the end of the year. Our typical school year has 180 days; a student can miss 5 cards per 9 weeks.

The easiest way is to stick strictly to the rules; however extenuating circumstances occur. The grandfather of three of my students passed away last year. The students missed only the day of the funeral. Due to missing cards in the past, the absence technically would have caused one of the students to miss the Good Citizenship Party. This proved to be an excellent time to read scriptures about mercy, love etc. and to vote as a class to allow this student to participate. Another student was extremely ill for 2 weeks and missed a party for which he was eligible. Due

to absence, he of course was not eligible for the next party. Students voted to allow him to attend since he had not been able to attend the previous party.

Using this plan does require some decision making, but it teaches students to think through situations and to think about how they would like to be treated. Every person's teaching style is somewhat different. If you know that your students work slowly or if you carry assignments over from 1 day to the next, you may want to establish 3 as the number of tickets that could be earned weekly. If the whole school is using the same plan, teachers should consult with one another regarding teaching methods, possible reasons for withholding ticket etc.

The game worked because the "tickets" were tangible evidence of good behavior, and students wanted the large certificates. Each nine weeks, we took pictures of the "Good Citizens Luncheon" and posted them on the bulletin board in the lobby. Students were happy to show parents their picture on the bulletin board.

Grade Levels:

My class last year was **grades 4-8**. One eighth grade girl who had been in my class since 3rd grade stated that she did not care to play the game. Fortunately, she told me in private and I had a chance to explain that she already met the criteria for the rewards and would not need to change her ways. The only difference to her would be that she would receive recognition for what she was already accomplishing.

The game is more suited to elementary classrooms. Like my eighth grade student, many seventh and eighth graders will feel that they are too sophisticated for this plan. In my opinion, this program will work best in a self-contained classroom or in a situation for other teachers use the same plan with basic rules and expectations the same throughout the school. My school is a small one with only 2 teachers.

Demerits:

In the event that a student must be separated from the group, partner with another teacher and have the student take class work with him to complete in his absence. With young students, you may want to shorten the length of separation to 15-20 minutes, depending on the age of the student. If there is no other teacher, a study carrel at the back of the classroom may be used.

Fix It! Finish It! Fun Friday Afternoons!

Other than the traditional Friday morning spelling test, I try not to start new assignments or have tests on Fridays. Students who need to "fix" work that was not up to standards, use this time to work. Accelerated students have time to work on individual projects.

In the afternoons, we see a film, have a mini-field trip (mini-field trips included a local park, art museum and a visit to the neighbors behind the school), special art assignment, or bake. Last year, I took 2-3 students at a time to a local pet shelter twice a month. We walked dogs and petted cats etc. This was done with approval of our conference superintendent. Students who were at school baked. We made cookies for soldiers, neighbors of the school and shut-ins from our church. Sometimes we made food for the next day's fellowship meal at church. Students who

had not completed their work by lunch time were not eligible to participate. This kept everyone motivated!!

Materials Used:

I simply cut colored cardstock into pieces 2 inches by 4 inches. I made 10 cards per student and used a marker to write a student's name on each card. Each student was given a library card pocket to keep cards in. The cards were reused for the entire year. Only 1 student lost cards. I agreed to replace those.

The lower grade teacher taped the library card pockets on student desks so they wouldn't be lost. She also put a sticker on each card.

Record Keeping:

The simplest method is for the teacher to record on a desk calendar the date a student exchanges the small cards and receives the large card. That way it is easy to track. You need to decide if students will keep large cards at school or take them home. To me, it was easier to keep them at school. Parents can be notified in a newsletter or brief phone call that their child received a good citizenship certificate. I have pocket storage system with one pocket for each student. They keep papers and other items needed over a period of time.

Good Citizenship Parties:

The lower grade teacher and I sponsored the parties. In some schools, Home and School Funds might be available. A church member, parent or other interested party might sponsor the party. It is vital that foods are kid friendly. Our parties served another purpose as well. Most of our students are non-Adventists or new Adventists and unfamiliar with a vegetarian diet. This gave us an opportunity to introduce vegetarian foods to our students.

Simple Menus:

1st Quarter – Vegetarian sub sandwiches with popsicles for dessert.

2nd Quarter – Vegetarian chili in bread bowls. We had cookies for dessert.

3rd Quarter – Vegetarian corn dogs, carrot sticks, macaroni and cheese. Dessert was cookies.

4th Quarter – Hay stacks. Dessert was popsicles.

Sample Texts and Quotes used for Journal Assignments:

Bible Verses from the New American Standard Bible

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Proverbs 15:1

“A hot tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger calms a dispute.” Proverbs 15:18

“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty. And he who rules his spirit than he who captures a city.” Proverbs 16:3

Bible Verses from New King James version

“If you love me keep my Commandments.” John 14:15

“This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.” John 15:12

“These things I command you that you love one another.” John 15:17

Quotations:

“Pray and let God do the worrying.” Martin Luther

“The more a man bows his knee before God, the straighter he stands before God.” Author unknown

“Shadows fall behind when we walk toward the light.” Anonymous

Annotated Bibliography

The following books, magazines and manuals were of value to me in my search for a workable discipline plan.

Bennett, William J. editor, *The Book of Virtues*, Simon and Schuster, New York. 1993.
This book has a collection of stories and poetry emphasizing traits such as responsibility, faith, trust, citizenship. Many of them are good for worship.

Chapman, Gary, Ph.D & Campbell, R. M.D., *The five Love Languages of Children*, Northfield Publishing, Chicago, 2005.

This book helps the teacher to understand student behavior and why individual students respond in a different manner to the same discipline techniques. The book has a suggested “script” for students to use in offering apologies. It offers a free on-line action plan which will help the teacher learn to speak the languages of love and apply concepts of the book.

<http://www.fivelovelanguages.com>

Day, Diana, *Teaching Self Control Vision Management The Foundation of Student Self Management*, Permanent Press Inc., 1993.

This book describes the 5 types or styles of management styles. On p.72, it offers a format for use when there is a need for restitution to be made.

Ruetzel, D.R., & Clark S., “Organizing Literacy Classrooms for Effective Instruction”, *The Reading Teacher* Vol. 65, #2 p.86-108.

This article gives a succinct overview of organizing every aspect of a classroom. It addresses physical organization of the classroom as well as organizing lesson plans. In my opinion, this article should be required reading for every new teacher.

Yeagley, Larry, *Beyond Anger Finding the Freedom of Forgiveness*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2006.

I used pre-selected segments of this book for worship with my students in grades 4-8. It gives many examples and uses scripture to help a person strengthen their understanding of people to people relationships. We all deal with anger whether our own or that of others. I also gave copies of this book to parents.

<http://www.nadeducation.org/education> If you go to the Educator Toolbox section of the site, you will find short video clips called Honor Code. You may enjoy making similar clips with your students or watching the clips. They address a variety of times when manners are necessary. The site will also accept video clips made by your students. The REACH Manual can be accessed here. In addition to the Light Skills, it discusses the classroom Climate; i.e. use of color, lack of clutter, etc.

[Your School's Name]
is playing the
Attendance, **B**ehavior, **C**ompletion of work
Game
of
New Beginnings

The rules are:

1. Attend school daily.
2. Complete all school work and homework on time and turn it in.
3. Treat others with respect in speech and actions.
4. Clean up after yourself and your activities.

Rewards:

1. Daily "Good Job" cards
2. 10 "Good Job" cards can be traded for 1 "Good Citizen" certificate
3. There will be a "Good Citizen's Luncheon" after each 9 weeks (free lunch and wear tie dye or Christian tee shirt that day). To be eligible, students may have missed earning a "Good Job" card no more than 5 times.

Fix It! Finish It! Fun Friday Afternoons!

At the end of the year Awards Assembly, each student who has earned a minimum of 14 "Good Citizen" award certificates will receive a "Good Citizen of the Year" Award.

Demerits:

Daily

1. Students will receive a warning mark for choosing to break rules.
2. A second mark in the same day = separation from the group for 1 hour plus the loss of the "Good Job" card for that day.
3. A third mark in the same day = in school suspension for the rest of that day plus notification of parent.

"Good Job" cards cannot be earned for days a student is not in attendance.

Each day at the end of each class period, students will be instructed to take incomplete work for homework.

On Thursdays, teachers will check up on student progress and send any incomplete work home for homework. If a student does not have the work done by the time school starts on Friday, they lose the "Good Job" card for that day.

Each day is a New Beginning and a new opportunity for success!!