

Final Project

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Rationale Paper to Accompany PowerPoint Presentation

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Abstract

Included is a rationale explaining why I included all of the information in the presentation I created and a summary of what I will discuss as I go through the presentation with an audience.

### Project Rationale

When thinking about my final project for the Psychology of Classroom Discipline course, I wanted to create a product that not only demonstrates my learning, but is something I can use in my own practice. I teach in a school located outside of Detroit. All students qualify for free breakfast and lunch. Most of the students are considered “at risk.” We face huge behavior-related problems daily. Low parental support and involvement is among the many challenging factors that come with the environment I teach in, and I am dedicated to changing this, at least in my classroom. The administration’s attitude toward getting parents and families involved is, “whatever it takes,” as it should be. Sprick explains the importance that parents and guardians have on children’s education, “There is no question that when school personnel and families work together to help meet the educational needs of students, the probability of effectively educating those student increases tremendously” (Sprik, 2009, p. 51). Jones and Jones reference Horne’s (2003) list of important steps in being an effective classroom manager; they suggest, “we need home-school coordinators to familiarize parents with the education of their children and make them active participants in their educational programs” (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 19). In a school that does not have someone assigned a role to only be “home-school coordinators,” the teacher must take this role on by providing parents and families with as much information as possible about the classroom. As a teacher, it is my job to educate my students so they can reach their full potential as learners, and this means I must do “whatever it takes” to involve students’ parents and families.

Early in the course I learned that teachers must “build positive relationships with your students’ families by making initial contact with them at the beginning of the year and maintain regular contact throughout the year” (Sprick, 2009, p. 51). For my final project I have decided to

focus on the early stages of reaching parents and building a relationship. I have created a slide show presentation made to be shown to parents during the first week of school at a back-to-school event. This presentation is meant to educate parents about my philosophy, classroom management, the importance of their support and involvement, and overall classroom organization while demonstrating my learning that took place throughout the Psychology of Classroom Discipline course.

“Welcome/Introduction” (Slides 1-3)

I made sure to include a welcome in the Arabic language because this is the language that the majority of the parents in my school speak. Jones and Jones suggest, “One personal touch you might try is to learn how to greet parents and guardians in the language used in their home. Parents are very impressed by competence” (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 143). I have included all of the possible ways to contact me and the option of arranging for a translator to encourage parents to feel that all gates for communication are open.

“About Me” (Slides 4-5)

When I meet someone for the first time, and they are friendly, talkative, and open with me, I feel like our relationship begins on a positive note. I try to do the same for parents, by sharing some personal information about myself, including my hobbies, interests, and about my family while portraying myself as a successful positive role model because “Young people seek models to assist them in their development of an identity” (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 62). I think it is important to be seen not just as a teacher, but a person too, with a real life. That makes you more appear more friendly and approachable. I agree with the idea that “First impressions are extremely important- especially when a relationship involves sporadic and somewhat role-bound

interactions- and it is imperative to do everything possible to create a positive initial meeting” (Jones & Jones, p. 143).

When sharing my philosophy, I will be sure to emphasize the importance of my belief in making content meaningful and relevant to students. Jones and Jones discuss how behavior and meaningful tasks are related, they state, “Unless the factors of creating personal connections between peers and students and staff, and implementing meaningful, engaging academic tasks are addressed, the popularized behavioral approaches to changing student behavior will be inadequate as interventions to create safe, productive learning environments” (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 11). It will also be important to highlight the idea of success. I will discuss that I am committed to having every child feel and experience success throughout the school year. When outlining Horne’s (2003) key teacher skills for effective classroom management, Jones and Jones list, “Nothing succeeds like success. Find something every child can excel in” (Jones & Jones, p. 19). I will share with the parents that I believe in identifying achievable goals for every student at the beginning of the year. The *CHAMPS* text explains the importance of making goals, “If you envision your goals, you are more likely to achieve them- and not end up achieving other, undesirable goals” (Sprick, 2009, p. 30).

“Now it’s your turn!” (Slide 6)

Building and maintaining positive teacher-student relationships is imperative for student achievement. Peregoy and Boyle (1993) explain that it is important for teachers to ask questions about students, especially if students have a different cultural background from the teacher (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 70). As I plan to do this with students, I would like to gather information about the students from the parents as well, as they may provide more honest and

informative answers than youngsters. Peregoy and Boyle created a list of topics to inquire about, including: “family structure, life cycle, roles and interpersonal relationships, discipline, time and space, religion, food, health and hygiene, history, traditions, birthdays” (Jones & Jones, p. 70). Using this list as a guide, I created a parent questionnaire that all parents will complete during the evening. The questions that parents will be asked are included, and I will also have an Arabic version of the document.

“Upcoming School Year” (Slide 8)

I have taken Sprick’s suggestion and I’ve included several aspects off of the “initial contact” list, including “a statement that you are looking forward to working with the student and getting to know the family” and “a statement that you anticipate a very good year” (Sprick, 2009, p. 53).

I will make sure to include how important high expectations are. I will explain the idea of “low expectations=low achievement, high expectations=set the stage for high achievement” (Sprick, 2009, p. 40). I will explain that I will have high expectations for every student in the classroom, and it is important for those high expectations must be communicated at home as well.

“Ongoing Communication” (Slide 9)

I have listed ways that I plan to communicate with parents throughout the entire year. I agree that, “it is important to keep parents continually informed about their children’s progress in your class” (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 147). It is also important to do this through various ways of communication. I am not the type of teacher to only contact parents when there are behavior problems or negative issues. Parents can expect to hear positive feedback about their child, too!

“From a Psychological Perspective” (Slide 10)

A common theme in the Psychology of Classroom Discipline course has been “the three C’s”- competence, connectedness, and contribution (Coopersmith, 1967). It is important for parents to understand that the teacher is aware of their child’s psychological needs and that these psychological needs will be considered throughout the school day. Stanley Coopersmith (1967) associates many positive feelings with meeting these psychological needs, including trust, self-esteem, significance, and accomplishment (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 33). Clearly, we want our students to feel good about themselves and their environment, so we must embed opportunities for these needs and feelings to be met consistently.

“Student Success in the Classroom” and “Multiple Intelligences” (Slides 11-13)

This section is meant to communicate to the parents that their child is an individual in my classroom and explain that means I differentiate instruction. One way I do so is by identifying learning styles and intelligences and using that information to teach students. I have listed the different types of intelligences and suggested activities. I will encourage parents to implement the suggested activities at home to help their child.

“Classroom Rules” (Slides 14-15)

I began this section explaining why we have rules and why they are important, “The first step in developing classroom rules is to discuss with students why it is important to develop standards all members of the class agree to follow” (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 178). It is important to discuss this with parents, too, so they can become supporters of the rules. Gathercoal (2004) created a list of “rights” every individual has and that rules are in place to protect these rights. Gathergoal lists the reasons to be: “health and safety, property loss and damage, legitimate

educational purpose, serious disruption of the learning process” (Jones & Jones, p. 179). I will further explain each of these rights to parents and share that I will also explicitly teach these rights to students as well, using child-friendly language so they clearly understand the purpose of our classroom rules.

I plan to implement class created rules. After teaching the reasons why we have rules, I will have students “list all standards they believe are important” (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 180). Then, from there, we will together come up with our list of rules that we all agree with and post them in the room. I feel that this allows students to feel like they have power and control in their environment, satisfying their need for contribution. Once the rules are decided upon, parents will receive a copy and they will be expected to sign and return a document to serve as a commitment to support these rules.

“Guidelines for Success” (Slides 16-17)

On this slide, I included the *CHAMPS* idea of “Guidelines for Success.” Sprick suggests, “develop and plan to actively share with your students guidelines that describe basic attitudes, traits, and behaviors that will help students be successful in your classroom and throughout their lives” (Sprick, 2009, p. 34). I like the idea for guidelines for success because as a teacher, I believe it is not only my responsibility to teach academic content, but also to teach students how to be successful, good people and active members of society. These “guidelines for success” reflect not only expectations for the classroom, but for life in general.

I included many examples from *CHAMPS* pages 35-39 to show parents. I will also explain to parents that in my classroom, students will be able to vote on their favorite or they will be allowed to create their own. I feel that giving students choice wherever possible allows them

to feel contribution, a psychological need in children. I will tell parents once we have come to a conclusion, these guidelines will serve as a type of theme in the classroom, as *CHAMPS* suggests, “If students are truly going to learn to exhibit these attitudes, traits, and behaviors, you need to make the guidelines a vibrant part of your classroom” (Sprick, 2009, p. 36).

“Rules vs. Procedures” (Slides 18-19)

Parents need to understand that there is a lot more to classroom organization than just having rules. In fact, “research indicates effective teachers not only work with students to develop general behavior standards (rules) but also teach the procedures they expect students to follow during specific classroom and school activities” (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 186). If procedures are in place, and students are aware of expectations, the day goes much smoother. At this point, I would explain to teachers that if students are asked to line up without a procedure in place to do so, this can become a disruptive, unsafe, time consuming task. If there is a procedure in place, students know how to act and what to do so the command can be completed quickly and smoothly. Having procedures preserves instructional time and “not only does this create a greater sense of significance, competence, and power for students but it can also dramatically assist the teacher by having students take responsibility for tasks that may take considerable time away from a teacher’s availability for students” (Jones & Jones, p. 89).

Procedures and rules must be explicitly taught. It is important to be aware of the fact that “teachers may mistakenly conclude that the teaching of expectations is not really necessary” (Sprick, 2009, p. 148). For students to be successful with procedures, they must be taught by “1. Discussing the need for the procedure 2. Possibly soliciting student ideas 3. Having students

practice the procedure until it is performed correctly 4. Reinforcing the correct behavior” (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 189).

I followed Figure 6.5 from *Comprehensive Classroom Management: Creating Communities of Support and Solving Problems* to create a list of procedures that will be explained to parents and taught to students (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 186). I would also include a detailed outline in a parent packet that must be reviewed and signed.

“Behavior System” (Slides 20-22)

I will take a few minutes to provide a general outline of the behavior system that will be followed in the classroom, for the individual, small group, and whole group. The whole school follows a “clip system” with colors and associated rewards and consequences. Although Emmer & Aussiker (1987), Nelson (1996), Nelson, Martella, & Galand (1998) found “these types of responses to be ineffective” (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 320); however, it is the system I must follow as it is school-wide, and I do think there are benefits to having one, consistent system that students follow grade after grade. A more effective individual behavior system includes students to develop a plan to fix their behavior, so I have included this in the school-wide behavior system to encourage a better working system (Jones & Jones, p. 320). Student desks are in clusters, as this arrangement “allows easy access from any part of the room to any other part of the room, making it easy to circulate among students” and “is excellent if you schedule frequent cooperative learning tasks” (Sprick, 2009, p. 72). Every month, students are assigned new seats and students choose a positive team name, allowing them to have some input and control in the classroom and encouraging a feeling of contribution. The whole group system uses positive reinforcement with a marble jar and student selected rewards, again letting students feel a sense of control and contribution in the classroom. The level of structure in my classroom will be high, based on the *CHAMPS* “Management & Discipline Planning Questionnaire” assessment (Sprick, p. 112). The marble

system is a reward-based, regular system, and “regular systems tend to be more appropriate when you are trying to motivate a class that needs high structure” (Sprick, p. 314).

“Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation” (Slide 23)

The differences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation will be explained. I will share that with the behavior plan we use extrinsic motivation and external rewards. With every lesson, I try to encourage intrinsic motivation, too, by helping students see the value of tasks and by making lessons enjoyable. I encourage that parents try to build intrinsic motivation at home by discussing the importance of and reinforcing effort, education, and the long-term benefits of success in school, as well as supporting the teacher’s expectations.

“The First Few Days” (Slide 24)

At this point, I will share what the parents can expect us to be doing in the classroom for the first few days. I will explain acquaintance activities that we may be doing and the importance of them in developing positive peer relationships in the classroom. Schwartz, Pettit, Dodge & Bates (2000) found that, “By implementing activities to enhance positive peer relationships, we increase the likelihood that a wider range of peers will be accepted and supported and we decrease the likelihood that bullying, intimidation, and isolation will be experienced by students” (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 105). Also, teachers must know “if you wish to create a classroom setting in which negative peer interactions and acting out behavior are minimized, it is essential to incorporate methods for helping students know how to interact positively with each other (Jones & Jones, p. 105). During the first few days, students will be working on creating rules and leaning about why we have rules, deciding on our “guidelines for success,” and learning and practicing procedures as previously discussed this is vital for a well-run classroom.

## Closing Section (Slides 25-26)

I will provide other contacts and resources they can go to for questions and information. Finally, I will thank parents for coming and remind them how important their support and involvement is. When inviting parents for back-to-school night, I will keep in mind the “obvious factors of being well groomed and personable” as well as the idea that “the teacher should be well organized and the classroom should look interesting” (Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 143). I will mail letters home and make personal phone calls home prior to the first day of school inviting them, as “it is important for elementary teachers to make a telephone contact in which something positive about the child is reported, to obtain parents’ commitment to attend the parent orientation meeting” (Jones & Jones, p. 143). It is clear that there is a positive correlation between the quality of parent involvement in a child’s education and student achievement. Therefore, as an educator of children, it is my role to do whatever it may take to build high-quality relationships and communication with parents.

## References:

Jones, V. F., & Jones, L. (2009). *Comprehensive classroom management, creating communities of support and solving problems*. (9th ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Sprick, R. (2009). *Champs a proactive and positive approach to classroom management*. (2nd ed.). Eugene, Oregon: Pacific Northwest Publishing.