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English

Grade 9

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A wondrous experience awaits the freshmen in their new English class this semester at Acme High School. The first day of high school will begin with an introduction of the class and the teacher; and the rest of the hour will be spent outlining classroom rules and consequences, and the routine and rationale of daily activities. On the second day of class, we will elaborate on the basic philosophy of the class and provide a framework for students to know themselves and use their self-understanding to identify with outstanding literature.

As students arrive to class on the first day, the teacher will set the tone by warmly greeting incoming students at the door (Wong, 106). Each student will be instructed to view the seating arrangement diagram in front of the room cast by the overhead projector (108). Their seats will be determined ahead of time, and arranged in five rows facing the front, the traditional way. This will help minimize interaction between students and enable students to focus on the teacher. (see attached diagram and rationale of the physical environment of the classroom.)

A brief introduction of the class and the instructor will be a logical lead-in into the discussion on the classroom rules and consequences. The teacher will explain that he enforces classroom discipline not to “be mean” but to create an orderly learning environment (143). Moreover, since rules safeguard the dignity of human beings, they teach loving and kind behavior. The instructor will explain his position that each human individual in the world is an awesome wonder endowed with unique gifts and intrinsic worth. This provides a basis of why we must treat our neighbor with total respect and

practice the Core Values implemented by the school. A large poster listing these Core Values will be posted in the front of the classroom (see attached handout sheet) (147).

After the talk about human dignity and core values, the instructor will make a pledge to each member of the class to make every effort to provide a “safe” environment, a culture of trust, where everyone gets along and feels special. Though specific rules related to the Core Values are obvious, some key rules may be spelled out on a poster or a handout including:

- No insults, name-calling, and put-downs
- No profanity
- Keep your hands, feet, and objects to yourself
- Be polite and helpful
- Keep the room clean and orderly

Before moving on to the discussion on the consequences for breaking the rules, the teacher will make a solemn promise (to try) to be fair and reasonable at all times. He will always strive to make each “punishment fit the crime” and judge each incident in a unique way (155). For example, if a student forgets her pencil, she must buy one from the teacher; if a student arrives late, he will miss the instruction; if a student walks in noisy, she must go back out and come back in quietly, etc. In serious disciplinary situations, the student will, of course, be asked to leave the classroom. Under no circumstances will disrespectful behavior be tolerated. In event that consequences are perceived by students

as too harsh, the teacher will encourage students to express their disagreement. If a reasonable case is made, the teacher may reconsider his decision. During the first day of class, he will even provide an opportunity for students to *rehearse* how to approach the teacher when they feel he isn't being fair or reasonable. Students also need to know that the teacher is human and makes mistakes, and is obligated to apologize when he realizes he is unjust and unkind.

Students will also be informed about a specific system of consequences for talking and misbehavior during class. To assure the instruction time flows without interruption, the teacher will simply write the names of misbehaving students on the chalkboard. If a student continues to act out, check marks will be added after his/her name (154). (Each citation mark will increase the seriousness of the consequences.). The penalty may be time spent in retention after school. (Also, see attached "Think About It" sheet to be fill out by student and signed by a parent.)

After talking about rules dealing with respecting others, the discussion will focus on rules that help the teacher do an effective job and contribute to an orderly, smooth-functioning classroom. At this point, the "5Ps" will be introduced (see attached handout).

The rest the first day of class will be devoted to rehearsing the procedures explained by the teacher (174). At the beginning of a typical day, students must walk into the room quietly, sit down, get out their materials for work and follow the instructions for the short assignment on the chalkboard. During this time, the teacher will take attendance. When

the ten-minute work time is over, the teacher will collect the work and begin to his lesson for the day (173).

The signal to get the student's attention will be rehearsed on the first day as well. It will involve the teacher simply extending his arm in the air. This gesture tells the students to stop talking and give the teacher their undivided attention (181).

Because students tend to abuse and disrupt the class with bathroom requests, there will be strict guidelines. First of all, only one student will be excused at a time. Second, each student will be issued three hall pass requests per quarter. He or she can, of course, use them as needed, or turn them in at the end of the quarter to receive extra credit points. This will encourage students to use these passes sparingly or not at all. Third, students cannot use their passes during the first 20 minutes of class (Teachers.net).

The routine for ending the class is as follows. Before the bell rings, students will look around their desks to see if their area is clean. Students must return to seats (if they are not seated already) and remain in their seats. The teacher, not the bell, will dismiss them (Wong, 177).

I believe in maintaining an “open door policy” with parents. Parents will be able communicate with me via email at any time and schedule a face-to-face meeting. The class website and parent letters will keep them informed about lesson plans, ways to help, and resources. During “coffee and donut” meetings, I could present a Power Point

presentation about my background and educational strategies. To better build rapport between the student and teacher, parents could voluntarily fill out a questionnaire about their child's likes/dislikes, hobbies, etc (Weinstein, 131).

The second day of class will introduce the content of the class. In my ninth-grade English class, I hope to share with students my joy, passion, and excitement of English literature; as well as train them in important life skills. I will propose to students that classic literature can inspire them to be better people, help them understand themselves and society, and serve as a springboard for expressing yourself through effective writing and speaking. As presented in "Teach Like Your Hair is on Fire" by award-winning educator Rafe Esquith, I will use a simplified version of Lawrence Kohlberg's Six Levels of Moral Development to help students identify their values and convictions (13-26). Since classic literature deals with universal human values and convictions, discussions of great books will inspire them in many ways. As a first step, the class will be view the movie "Groundhog Day" to identify Kohlberg's stages and discuss how literature relates to them.

Core Values

- Honesty
- Respect for others/self
- Responsibility
- Integrity
- Courtesy
- Citizenship

5 Ps

- **Prompt:** Arrive to class on time.
- **Prepared:** Have the following items with you...
 - pen
 - notebook
 - homework
 - textbook
- **Procedural:** Follow the established routines.
- **Positive:** Have a good overall attitude in the class.
- **Participate:** Contribute to class discussions.

(To be given to students who break the rules)

“Think About It”

Date:

What happened?

Which of the “5 P’s” / Core Values were involved in decision making?

How did it relate to the concept of human dignity, and a safe, orderly classroom?

What choice (s) could you have made?

Student Signature:

Parent Signature:

Comments:

9th Grade English Classroom

Diagram Key

A. **“You are Awesome” bulletin board.** This prominent piece of “real estate” is devoted to a particular student each week. The assigned student can decorate the board any way he/she wishes, with photos of loved ones, pictures representing hobbies, favorite bands, belief systems, etc. *Rationale:* to affirm each member of the class as unique and special.

B. **Overhead slide.** As mentioned, the overhead projector shows the preassigned seating chart. *Rationale:* to help student find their seats.

C. **Posters of Core Values and “5 Ps”** *Rationale:* to serve as a visual aid which constantly reminds students of what is expected of them.

D, E, F. **Bulletin boards** that explain the three “keys” to understanding English literature— Pre-modernism, Modernism, and Post-modernism. Each bulletin board contains pictures and words forming collages representing its respective worldview. *Rationale:* To function as a constant reference for understanding the minds of classic English authors.

Works Cited

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