

Managing to Be Prepared

By Martha Nabors

Theresa stepped into an eighth-grade science class for her student teaching and within two weeks realized there wasn't a classroom management plan in place. A soft-spoken young lady of 4' 10," Theresa was sure that the boisterous students would chew her up and spit her out when it came time to present her first lesson and the accompanying hands-on science lab.

Theresa discussed her situation with me, her supervising teacher, and developed a short contract that outlined rules for the class to follow to complete her hands-on science lessons. The contract included an acknowledgment for students to sign that stated they knew the expected behavior they were to demonstrate. Failure to follow these rules and procedures would lead to individual written work that covered the same material the rest of the class would cover in their groups.

After reviewing the contract together, we agreed that it was a wise strategy to ensure a successful experience. We also agreed that she must share this idea with her cooperating teacher and get approval before sharing it with the students.

The following week, the teacher gave her blessing to the management system contract, and Theresa distributed it to the class. She discussed the consequences of a signed contract that was not honored and answered students' questions. Every student in the class signed the contract and Theresa's first lesson proceeded without any behavioral problems.

During a second lesson, however, a young boy in the back of the class strayed off task and Theresa reminded him about his signed contract. When he continued to bother his classmates, Theresa announced that he had broken his contract and quietly removed him from the group. She then handed him a paper folder with four worksheets over the same material the group was covering and directed him to a seat in the back of the classroom where he was to complete his work by the end of the class period.

When two boys broke their contracts during her third lesson, Theresa quietly removed them from their groups and sent them to the back of the classroom to complete worksheets that covered the hands-on science material.

In the end, Theresa found that her well-thought-out management plan worked. In fact, her cooperating teacher asked whether she could continue Theresa's contract system once Theresa left her classroom. Now that's quite a compliment to Theresa and her ability to "be prepared."

About the Author

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