Part I:

The goals of my classroom management plan for a high school environment include fostering a positive student-teacher relationship built on mutual care and respect, and promoting important life skills such as responsibility, autonomy, and self-regulation. Adolescent students certainly still need to be taught the behavioral expectations for their classroom environments, yet, at this stage in their lives, major steps towards independence, identity development, empathy, metacognition, and other advanced critical thinking skills should be introduced and infused into their educational experiences. In addition to conveying content, teachers must prepare students for their future life endeavors, and challenge them to think for themselves, to problem solve, synthesize, evaluate, and question. These vital abilities can begin to be developed at the onset of a new school year; the teacher sets the tone of his or her classroom when presenting rules, procedures, and other expectations, thus I intend to use those early meetings with my students to establish and support my high school dance classroom management goals.

Beginning on the first day of school, I will promote the notion that my classroom is a community of respect and genuine care through “ice-breaker” and “getting to know you” activities. A game such as, “Two Truths and a Lie” can provide students with the opportunity to share information about themselves with the rest of the class and myself in an interactive and creative way. Furthermore, opening the first day of class in this manner initiates what I intend to be a positive student-teacher relationship with each of my students. By showing an interest in
their personal lives at our first meeting, rather than unfurling a tedious list of rules and expectations, my students will see me as a teacher who truly cares for them, sees them as unique individuals, and yearns to include them (and their interests) in the learning and creative process that will take place over the rest of the school year.

In addition to investing time to learn about students’ lives, Weinstein & Novodvorsky (2011) suggest that being sensitive to students’ concerns and welcoming their input also can be effective methods in which a teacher can establish a respectful and caring learning environment. Utilizing these approaches would be especially useful in my dance studio classroom as some students may have little to no previous experience with dance or the performing arts. In that case, it would be pertinent to have the students voice any concerns or worries they may have about being in a dance class – out loud, or in written form. Other important pieces of information to attain from my students are their personal assumptions and expectations about dance and about my class. For example, there may be a few students who are extremely interested in learning how to tango. Some students may be quite fearful about having to dance in front of their classmates. Taking all of this knowledge into consideration will allow me to adapt my class to better suit the specific needs of my students, further developing trust and respect within a positive student-teacher relationship.

This rapport will be supported throughout the course of the school year through methods such as attending and acknowledging, active listening, and student-teacher problem solving (Weinstein & Novodvorsky, 2011). These approaches involve giving my undivided attention to any student that approaches me with concerns and/or problems, exhibiting true understanding and empathy for their point of view, and working together as a team to find a resolution of some sort. To me, enriching and strengthening a student-teacher relationship is just as important as
forging one. Therefore, I will use the preceding strategies to follow through with my “first day of school” claims, continuing to prove that I value my students as people, respect them, and truly believe in them. Ultimately, students of any age, background, and ability need to feel safe and supported in their classroom environment. By establishing a culture of care and respect in my dance studio classroom, students will respond positively and, in turn, behave in a prosocial and appropriate way. That is, I believe once the mutual respect and dignity within the learning environment has been modeled and sustained, adherence to classroom rules and behavior expectations will be more successful, and student participation and motivation to succeed will increase.

These classroom rules and expectations that I intend to introduce early in the year will follow four basic guidelines as detailed by Weinstein & Novodvorsky (2011): “rules should be reasonable and necessary…rules need to be clear and understandable…rules should be consistent with instructional goals and with what we know about how people learn…rules need to be consistent with school rules,” (pgs. 96-99). Working from these notions, I developed a set of rules and sub-rules that are relevant to a dance studio classroom. The rules will be distributed to students so that they may read along as I review the content, and so they have a copy to bring home to their parents or guardians; an additional copy will be posted on a bulletin board within the classroom to serve as reference and reminder. While I created the rules on my own, I plan to include my class in this process by engaging in a discussion regarding the rules’ primary purposes – namely, to keep the students physically and emotionally safe, and to ensure that learning occurs. In this discussion, I will ask my class why they believe I developed these rules and expectations, and if they feel any do not follow Weinstein & Novodvrosky’s (2011) four guidelines for classroom rules. If, for any reason, the class discussion results in a reasonable
need to change or add to the existing rules, I will do so, but will explain to students that I am not obligated to. Considering my students’ input and taking the time to ensure that they not only understand what the rules and expectations are, but why they have been chosen to guide behavior in my classroom are important classroom management principles that I expect will contribute to student acceptance and following of my class’s rules.

However, I realize that despite my planning efforts and good intentions regarding classroom management, I will still have to respond to student misbehavior. Minor infractions, such as speaking at inappropriate times, disrespecting others’ personal space, or moving in an unsafe way, would typically result in a verbal warning of some sort. Strategies that I may use in these cases would include inserting the student’s name into what I happen to be instructing at that point, using gentle humor, and referencing the copy of the rules posted on the bulletin board to remind him or her of the expected behaviors in my classroom (Weinstein & Novodvorsky, 2011). In some situations, a nonverbal response to student misbehavior (i.e., giving a stern look or moving to stand in closer proximity) may be more appropriate, as it would be less disruptive to the lesson and cause less attention to be drawn to the misbehaving student(s). Both are vital principles to consider when addressing inappropriate behavior, according to Weinstein & Novodvorsky (2011); instruction should continue with as little disruption as possible (though the misbehavior should be acknowledged in some way, and in a timely manner), and the need to “save face,” or uphold one’s reputation, is very important to adolescent students. At such a crucial developmental stage in a young person’s life, a teacher should not belittle or embarrass when aiming to curb misbehavior. I value developing a mutual respect and trust within the positive student-teacher relationship more than creating an authoritarian learning environment, enforced through reprimand and punishment.
Yet, there are situations in which more serious consequences to misbehavior must be administered. When those arise, I will discreetly ask the student to meet with me after class to discuss their behavior in private. By delaying the conversation, any personal frustrations that may arise (on my part or on the part of the student) hopefully will have had time to diffuse, so the student and I can discuss the nature of the misbehavior and an appropriate consequence in a calm manner (Weinstein & Novodvorsky, 2011). A penalty that students may have to face after failing to change their behavior after three verbal warnings is participating in a parent-teacher-student conference. This may be conducted in person or via phone or email, and is intended to include all three parties in a discussion about how the misbehavior is affecting the student’s work in class. Within conferences such as these, a plan for change in the future can be developed, allowing the student to take responsibility for his or her behavior; again, it is my belief that involving the student in the process of managing behavior supports autonomy and other prosocial qualities that will serve to benefit the student in their future endeavors.

Another penalty students may experience relates to their attire in the dance studio classroom – in essence, their ability to participate. Clothing that is not bulky or baggy, while still allowing for unrestricted movement of the body must also follow the school’s dress code policy. Just as students may have to face some sort of consequence for failing to bring a textbook or assignment to another class, coming to my dance class wearing inappropriate clothing constitutes being unprepared for class. In this situation, I would have the student sit out of class and complete a written assignment of some sort. After two “non-participation” days, the student’s grade suffers by being lowered one point. I believe this consequence is logically related to the misbehavior/offense, another principle of classroom management suggested by Weinstein & Novodvorsky (2011), as it connects the student’s opportunity to learn with one of the products of
his or her learning (his or her grade). It also promotes the need for students to be responsible, one of my primary goals within this classroom management plan.

1. Dress appropriately for class. You will need to be able to move freely, while still upholding the school’s dress code policy!
   - Jeans do not allow for full freedom of movement; low-cut shirts, belly shirts, and booty shorts violate the school’s dress code.
   - Hair must be pulled back and loose jewelry removed, as they may dangerously get in the way of your dancing.
Students not dressed appropriately will not participate in class. After every 2 “non-participation” days, students’ final grade will be lowered one point.

2. Behave respectfully towards teacher and peers. Treat others as you would wish to be treated!
   - Speak at an appropriate volume
   - Be aware of yourself and others in space (avoid crowding and taking up too much room in this small studio)
   - Be attentive and quiet when others are speaking or performing
Students who are not behaving in a respectful and courteous way in class will receive a total of three verbal warnings, after which a parent-teacher-student meeting will be scheduled to discuss that student’s behavior.

3. Conduct yourself in a safe manner in the studio. Behaving safely not only affects you, but the teacher and other students in the class, as well!
   - Inform the teacher if you are injured.
   - Keep cell phones on silent, not vibrate. Hearing the vibration can be a disruption to the class, and may distract students from paying attention to their surroundings.
   - Only practice partnering or acrobatic skills under the supervision of the teacher.
Students who are not being safe in the studio will also receive a total of three verbal warnings, after which a parent-teacher-student meeting will be scheduled to discuss that student’s behavior.

4. Homework submitted more than 2 days past the due date will NOT be accepted. Students are responsible for catching up on assignments they may have missed due to absence. If there are extraordinary circumstances related to homework completion, students should speak with their teacher.

Apart from the rules for classroom behavior, procedures for typical, day-to-day activities (i.e., collecting homework, going to the restroom, etc.) should be fully explained and discussed with students, in order to promote clarity and consistency in the learning environment (Weinstein & Novodvorsky, 2011). At the high school level, students are unlikely to need to “practice” the
expected routine for these activities in the beginning days of school. Yet, prompting students before the activity begins – for instance, pointing to the bin on my desk labeled “homework” as students enter the room to remind them where their work should go – can help streamline the procedure and minimize transition time, until the behaviors can be performed without teacher guidance (Weinstein & Novodvorsky, 2011). The procedures I will implement for my dance class are straightforward and concise. Homework will be deposited in a labeled bin found on my desk as soon as students enter the classroom. After each class, I will transfer the papers to a folder appropriately labeled with the class level and/or period, to avoid confusion on my part and to keep everything organized in a familiar location. Once the students hand in their homework, they will deposit their belongings in a previously designated area, such as along the back wall of the room or in cubbies, and find a space to stand in the center of the studio as they warm up or review content from a previous class. Having the students orient themselves in the same location each day will aid me in quickly scanning to determine if any students are absent and/or late. A computer program or online platform provided by the school district will help me keep track of attendance, grades, and any other notes related to my students. However, if a school district does not have a preferred method for these procedures, I would use a Teacher’s Planning Notebook, or a spreadsheet devised on my own computer. If a student needs to use the restroom, he or she must raise his or her hand and ask for permission to leave. I will allow only one student at a time to be out of the room for restroom purposes. While discussing and reviewing my classroom procedures may seem mundane to the students, I believe it is integral to address the expected behavior for these situations, and to remind them intermittently, in order to ensure as much classroom time as possible is dedicated to the students’ learning.
Part II:

In our culturally diverse nation, teachers in the public school system must display culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM) in their instructional content, physical classroom design, and pedagogical practice to ensure a healthy, supportive, and equal learning experience for all students. A CRCM is not a “shallow” sensitivity to cultural diversity, or one that speaks in general terms and tends to lump members of a particular group together based on a believed-to-be common trait and/or behavior (Pollock, 2008). An educator has to understand that a student’s race, ethnicity, sex, gender, socioeconomic class, physical and/or learning abilities are all aspects that together comprise a completely unique personality and temperament. Thus, for example, while perhaps having positive intentions when decorating one’s classroom with posters that depict members of various ethnic groups, the images may portray the group in a negative light or offend students who identify in that way.

In Deyhle’s chapter “What is on your classroom wall? Problematic posters” (2008), she describes an instance in which a few Native American students were distressed to see a poster of a Native American man, hair braided with a feather in his hair, standing on a mountain cliff and outstretching his arms to the sun hanging in a counselor’s office. She later learned that these students were upset to be lumped together into a stereotypical perception of their ethnic group, and felt the counselor wasn’t attempting to get to know them as individuals, apart from their heritage (or what he believed their heritage was like). Though this counselor presumably did not intend to insult these students, he failed to depart from a shallow understanding of Native American culture, exemplifying one of the conflicts that can arise in a classroom that harbors a “cultural gap” between teachers and students.
In this case, it might have been more appropriate for the counselor to learn the specific Native American tribes these students belonged to before mounting a poster with a stereotypical portrayal of one tribe. Perhaps even more importantly, the counselor should have reflected upon why he chose that poster – was it because he wanted to seem accepting of all cultures and just randomly grabbed one? Was he blind to the cultural message loaded within the image? When aiming to create a culturally responsive classroom, it is crucial to consider questions such as these because a student that feels disrespected and misunderstood by a teacher is unlikely to respond in a positive way academically.

Another instance in which a “shallow” understanding of a student’s culture may impede his or her equal learning experience includes targeting a student or group of students as “at risk” for behavioral problems based on their race or gender. Ferguson (2000) discusses the frequency with which African American male students are reprimanded for behavioral issues in the educational system, as well as how this subset of students are often viewed as sinister and fully conscious of their actions. She argues that innocence or childish naiveté are often not cited as reasons for misbehavior in young, African American boys, and that these perceptions negatively influence their educational environments, sometimes causing these students to develop low self-esteem and low self-worth, reflected in their poor academic achievement (which perpetuates the stereotype).

Again, teachers need to embrace the fact that each of their students are unique, and components of their cultural identity are not data with which to make unsupported assumptions about them. If an instance arose involving both an African American boy and a Caucasian boy causing disruption in the classroom, it would be necessary to treat both students in the same manner; reacting more negatively towards one boy because of his race could cause another
conflict within the learning environment, perhaps resulting in more behavioral problems in the future.

In order to enact CRCM in my own classroom, I can dig deeper into the class discussion regarding my pre-determined rules, as I mentioned earlier on in my classroom management plan. When introducing the behavioral expectations for my class, I intend to engage students in a conversation about what the purposes of these rules are. In addition to this strategy, I should be explicit in my definition of particular behaviors (i.e., behave in a respectful way) since showing respect can manifest in very different ways depending on one’s cultural background. Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke (2003) discuss this approach, saying “in some cultures, for example, making eye contact is a sign of respect, while in others respect is communicated by maintaining an averted gaze,” (pg. 271). Taking the time to be specific about classroom norms and policies at the beginning of the year can help in creating a culturally responsive learning environment in which students are successful academically and socially.

An additional CRCM strategy to employ in my classroom references my communication with students. When determining and developing my teaching demeanor, I should consider the cultural backgrounds and experiences of my current students (Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003). Prior to that, however, I must work to discover how my own culture and past educational experiences have influenced my natural discourse; knowing about my personal cultural identity can provide me with valuable insight regarding my teaching style. For example, I was raised around, and tend to respond to, authority figures that are empathetic and polite, yet assertive. Therefore, I am likely to assume a discourse that reflects what my culture values. If my natural demeanor or pedagogical approach is ineffective or does not resonate with my students because of teacher-student cultural differences, I should seek resources that can help me
better understand how to effectively communicate with students of a different cultural background.

Finally, to maintain a CRCM I must establish effective and appropriate communication with my students’ families. In addition to the necessity of having a positive and cooperative relationship between his or her home life and school life, showing sensitivity and respect to the family’s culture can be another way to support the student. Difficulties may arise if the student’s family and I are from different cultural backgrounds, and perhaps have varying definitions of what appropriate classroom behavior is, but the crucial thing is to initiate a two-way method of communication between the student’s parents and/or guardians and me (Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003). Mirroring my philosophy regarding student behavior in the classroom setting, I believe that if respect and genuine interest, aligned with the family’s cultural traditions, are shown, the sentiment will be returned and a positive student-teacher-family relationship will be forged.
References


