

GENE RYMAN

CHOIR DIRECTOR/THEORY AND COMPOSITION TEACHER

Port Jefferson Station, NY

gene.ryman@gmail.com – 516.459.6257 – [linkedin](#)

Classroom Management Plan

Philosophy

In being an effective educator, proper classroom management is as important as knowledge of one's subject matter. I believe that the key to effective classroom management is consistency: consistency in lesson structure, consistency rewarding good behavior, and consistency in punishing poor behavior. Consistency allows students to know what is expected of them, in terms of both behavior and work ethic. Information regarding lesson structure and classroom rules can be found in the corresponding sections below.

Another aspect of my classroom management style is to make the classroom as much of a democracy as possible. For example, aside from using only pre-planned repertoire, I will allow students to vote on a popular song to perform. Aside from repertoire, I plan on giving students opportunities to shine as individuals as often as possible, such as performance of solos, arrangements of pop tunes, conducting the choir, and accompaniment, both on piano and in small bands, depending on the piece of music. Through this, I hope to teach my students the value of respect, self-expression, and leadership.

Classroom Structure

The piano and the board behind it at the front of the room will be the main focus of the students throughout the duration of the class. It is where I will rehearse music from, and it is where sight-singing and theory lessons will take place (see the *Lesson Structure* section below for details on this).

Ideally, I will have enough bulletin board space to post information about upcoming events, both in the school and the community, as well as pictures from past events. The purpose of this is to create a sense of belonging and community within the classroom. As one example of how I might further develop this sense of community, I intend to have a space on this board where students can write down song recommendations, both for their fellow students and for myself. Every month or so, I will allow students to take a vote, and the most popular of those songs will be played in class, during a period devoted entirely to listening. This would likely occur on a Friday.

Lesson Structure

Each lesson will begin with students entering the classroom and immediately individually coming to the piano in the front of the classroom and singing through a short sight-singing example written on the board, two measures in length. This will be counted as part of their

participation credit and it will get them into singing-mode, so to speak. This period of the class should end by roughly five minutes after the bell rings.

Following this, students will warm up as a group. These warm ups will include breathing exercises, singing/playing exercises, and conducting exercises. This will, ideally, not only warm up their voices, but warm up their minds as well.

The duration of the lesson will revolve around learning music and learning *about* music. Ideally, the class will rehearse one song/piece. Through rehearsing the music, concepts regarding proper vocal technique will be introduced and expanded upon. After this, a general theoretical concept will be introduced, usually involving scales, solfege, rhythm, improvisation, and sight-singing. Following this brief theory lesson, the class will rehearse a new song, return to the previous song, or stick with the theory lesson. The latter will usually be the case when working with improvisation or sight-singing.

At the end of class, students will have a minute or two to look at the recommendation board (mentioned in the *Classroom Structure* section), to either add something or write down a song to check out.

Individualized Learning

The average music classroom contains students with a wide range of abilities, from the musically challenged to the exceptionally musically talented. Such vastly different students need to be treated in different ways. Personalized learning is about acknowledging this and acting accordingly; understanding that you are teaching a group of unique individuals with their own needs, desires, and fears, rather than viewing the classroom as a singular, unchanging entity.

As discussed above, in the music classroom, one of the major aspects of personalized learning comes from the musical abilities and tastes which the students bring to the classroom. This tends to be a very wide spectrum.

In the beginning of the school year, I always make a point of finding out about each student individually in terms of singing ability, musicianship, and involvement in music outside of school. This gives me a general idea of the kinds of activities and the level of repertoire I can use in the class. This also gives me information about the abilities of the individual students and how I can best serve their needs.

As for the exceptionally talented students, I've found it productive and enjoyable to provide them with leadership roles, be it section leader, teaching individual sections their parts in another room, or group choreography, if appropriate, depending on the specific strengths and abilities of the student. In addition, whenever appropriate, I enjoy giving students accompanist roles, either on piano or on some other combination of instruments appropriate to the style of the music. Not only do these things give the individual students opportunities to grow, but it also adds to the feeling of community in the classroom and has a positive effect on the overall product.

On the other side of this spectrum is the musically un-gifted, frequently the "tone deaf" student. It is my belief that most people referred to as tone deaf are actually not, but rather are simply people who have not had the necessary musical experiences to mold a strong aural understanding of individual pitches. In this situation or situations like it, I would suggest that the student come in after school (or during lunch, study hall, or any other free time the student may have) occasionally to work on pitch matching exercises so that they, ideally, could catch up with the rest of the group in terms of singing ability.

Regardless of the situation, the classroom is not a singular group, but a collection of individuals with their own individual passions, fears, and skills, and should be treated as such.

Classroom Rules

It has been my intention since I first began teaching to not only teach music, but to enrich the lives of my students through music. This must be achieved by teaching open-mindedness and respect for themselves and others through word and through deed. The educator must respect the student just as much as the student respects the educator. It is my hope that my students develop not only into good musicians, but into good people as well.

My classroom rules are simple, and they all revolve around students respecting one another. I take bullying very seriously, but I also strongly believe in second chances. Anyone caught bullying will at first receive a warning. After that, if it persists, the administration as well as the student's parents will be notified.

I take a similar approach to tardiness. First strike results in a warning, second results in classroom detention, and the third results in notification of the administration. These rules will vary, of course, based on the district's guidelines for managing this kind of behavior.

Overall Learning Experience

Beyond rewarding good behavior and punished bad behavior, I believe the most effective way of managing one's classroom is to create an engaging, challenging learning environment which is meaningful in the context of the individual students' own lives. Often, when students act out, it's because they are bored. This boredom has many roots: the material may be too easy and the students do not have enough to challenge them; the material may be too difficult and the students may have given up trying; or the students may not find the material relevant to their own lives and are therefore unmotivated to try. By engaging the students and allowing the democratic process into the classroom, not only will a major source of misbehavior be averted, but students are more likely to retain a sense of belonging and a lifelong love of music as well.