**Classroom Climate**

**Room Arrangement**

In my first six week student teaching experience I was in a first grade classroom. When you first walk into the room you were presented with an assortment of desks, rectangular tables, and a curved table on your left. On the right was a teacher's desk, a mail box station, and the front of the classroom. My favorite part of the room was that there was two different areas that the whole class could sit on the floor for a lesson. One area was at the front of the classroom where there was a smart board and an easel. This area had a place for the teacher to sit as well as a giant carpet for the students to sit on. This part of the classroom was most utilized for whole group lessons as well as any read-alouds we did. The other area the kids could sit on the floor for a whole group lesson was in the back of the classroom. This area is where the calendar and weather routine was done daily. We also had a stamina chart hanging in this back area that we filled out as a class daily. This area was a bit smaller but still practical and had a place for the teacher to sit. The room I taught in also had a small classroom library in one corner of the room. In this area there was a book shelf as well as bean bags the kids could use and move to any place in the classroom they wanted. There was also a station on the left of the classroom right as you walk in that had all the supplies the students may need during their day. In the far left corner of the room there was a sink the students could utilize as well as a storage area where many of the free choice toys were located.

I believe that every classroom looks different because every teacher knows what works for them. The teacher I was with had been teaching for many years and I believe her classroom was set up based on experience and knowing what works with kids and what doesn't.

**Procedures and Routines**

I feel very lucky to have been able to student teach at the very beginning of the school year. I was able to see how many of the routines and procedures are established at the beginning of the school year. Interactive modeling paired with practice seemed to be the perfect match in creating solid routines in this first grade classroom. Routines I got to help establish include lining up at the door, putting books away, getting out materials, walking in the hallway, going to the bathroom, cleaning up, and transitioning from one lesson to the next. Once the students were familiar with what was expected they were very responsible students. In my future classroom, I will use interactive modeling in the beginning of the school year to model what I expect the students to do. This will help support my students personal responsibility skills.

**Managing Student Work**

Student work was organized into different cubbies in the back of the classroom. Each student was assigned to a color group and each color had a column of cubbies. Each row of cubbies was something different such as their blue journals, math journals, whiteboard journals, etc. I believe that one of the best ways my teacher managed student work was that she held the students accountable for their daily whiteboard work immediately. She had the students come and show her their work right when they finished, and then they were allowed to read a book. This also made it easy for us to see who was getting their work completed and who was not. Homework was graded on completion. Because at this level most parents are helping students with their homework it makes more sense to give a completion grade than for points. This was managed by a simple check off list. If a student was not getting their homework done for whatever reason, a note would go home to the guardians letting them know the homework needs to be completed. I learned that the best way to manage student work is to stay on top of it and organized.

As far as instructions my cooperating teacher used a variety of techniques. While establishing routines in the beginning of the year she used a lot of interactive modeling. I feel the interactive modeling was successful because it set very clearly to the students what the expectation for the rest of the year would be. Other times my teacher would simply use verbal or written instructions for the students. She used different techniques based on the different lessons being taught.

**Rules and Consequences**

While rules and consequences will always have to be established at some point during the school year, I especially liked the way my cooperating teacher went about establishing her rules and consequences. Instead of throwing a ton of rules and consequences at the students in the first week of school, she started slow and introduced them as they became necessary. The first week of school we went over the B.A.R.K. rules which is a school wide acronym used in all classrooms. BARK stands for be prepared, act responsibly, respect everyone and everything, and keep safe. The students participated in a lesson discussing what each letter means and looks like to them. The teacher then typed up their responses and hung the rules in the classroom as a reminder for the students.

About a week into school my cooperating teacher informed me that the group of students we had were better behaved than average. Because of this, we didn't need to bring up consequences until about the third week of school. The consequence most used in the classroom I was in was the take-a-break chair. The take-a-break chair was used to give students an opportunity to remove themselves from the rest of the class for a couple minutes and reflect on what they were doing and how they can get themselves back on track. My cooperating teacher never wanted the take-a-break chair to result in tears or making a child feel badly, so while introducing it she had every student sit in the chair and see how it felt. I observed that the take-a-break chair worked well for the next few weeks I was in the classroom. Students were able to pull themselves back together and there were no tears.