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Classroom Management Plan

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CEP 883

Classroom Management Plan- Final Project

A plan for classroom management: How will you organize your classroom community? Include a discussion of the why you have chosen certain classroom management elements (using one of the theories we'll read about) and propose a plan for how you will design at least 5 aspects of your management plan (for example, classroom rules, physical arrangement, peer learning groups, student-student relationships, etc.). Be sure to provide a rationale for why you propose what you do using "best practices" and class or other readings

If... By Pamela Houk If I can Ask my own questions, Try out my ideas, Experience what's around me, Share what I find: If I have Plenty of time for My special place, A nourishing space, Things to transform; If you'll be My patient friend, Trusted guide, Fellow investigator, Partner in learning; Then I will Explore the world, Discover my voice, And tell you what I know

In a hundred languages

This poem, written by Pamela Houk gives a glimpse into the Reggio Emilia approach to teaching, found in the book, The Hundred Languages of Children; The Reggio Emilia Approach - Advanced Reflections (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998, p. 293). In order to create a management plan for a classroom, I believe you must first decide how you will teach your students. My management plan will be loosely based off of the Reggio Emilia style of learning for my future preschool class. We must first understand the basics of this style of learning before we explore my management plans. According to the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance, Loris Malaguzzi influenced teachers, students, and the community of Reggio Emilia, Italy into a new age of learning "inspired by many early childhood psychologists and philosophers, such as Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Gardner and Bruner" (North American, 2013). This approach is not traditional in the United States. Unlike in most schools, "teachers and students partake in what the Reggio educators call negotiated learning, the curriculum is not child centered or teacher directed. The curriculum is child originated and teacher framed" (Edwards et al., 1998, p. 240). Reggio Educators want children to explore multiple avenues of learning and not have to worry about following a set curriculum. They believe "the children have the right and the ability to express their thinking, theories, ideas, learning and emotions in many ways. Therefore, Reggio educators provide children with a wide range of materials and media, and welcome a diversity of experiences, so that children encounter many avenues for thinking, revising, constructing, negotiating, developing and symbolically expressing their thoughts and feelings" (North American, 2013).

As we go through the different aspects of my management plan, we will explore the Reggio Emilia approach more in depth. Again, I want to stress that I am merely using the Reggio

approach as a guideline to my teaching in addition to our course text books and my own personal beliefs. My classroom management plan will focus on including these aspects:

- Behavior standards/expectations
- Physical arrangement/environment
- Student-student relationships/peer learning
- Student-teacher relationships
- Parent-teacher relationships

Behavior Standards/Expectations

I believe it is of the utmost importance to set certain behavioral standards and expectations in the classroom. When a teacher does not create these norms, the students must guess which behaviors are acceptable, creating more instances of misbehavior (Sprick, Garrison and, Howard, 2009). As you will note, I will not use the word rules in my classroom because it seems more aggressive and compliance oriented. Since we believe the goal of schooling is educating, it will serve the students better to create a sense of community (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 171). I believe it is more efficient when the students are involved in the creation of the behavior standards. According to Jones and Jones (2012), "in numerous studies, students express their desire to have teachers incorporate more interactive strategies that involve greater student participation" (p. 226). Reggio schools reflect the values of the community (North American, 2013) and Jones and Jones (2012) state that it is important to "reinforce the concept that the classroom group and the school are a society and, like larger societal groups, will function more effectively when people agree to behavior standards that help to ensure a safe, caring

environment" (p. 171). Therefore, within the first few days of school, we will list all of the behavior standards we think are functional for our class.

I will make sure we have expectations that cover all areas in the school; opening/attendance routines, class meetings, play areas, independent work, cooperative groups, and on the playground (Sprick et al., 2009, p. 151). After we have brainstormed all of the standards we want as a class, we will go through and decide which ones do not apply to the classroom and which ones can be combined. Although I will be brainstorming with my class, a few behavioral standards that I will make sure are on the list are: respect each other, teachers, and the school, keep our hands and feet to ourselves, listen, and have fun. Since most preschoolers are not proficient readers, I think it is most helpful to use colorful pictures showing our behavior expectations on a large poster and bulletin board so that the students can easily see and reference them.

Once the behavior standards are in place, it is important for all of the students to agree to follow them to the best of their abilities. "Getting a commitment" (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 175) is an important way for the students to acknowledge the importance of these expectations. I do not believe signing the poster in the traditional sense will help the students feel connected, however, I think that allowing the students to 'sign' the poster with finger painted handprints will make the students enjoy this process more.

Since the children are young, it is important to continue to review the classroom expectations throughout the school year. We must, "discuss rules, develop a list, get a commitment, monitor and review, and reinforce norms" (Jones & Jones, 2012, pp. 172-183). In addition to the large poster and bulletin board pictures, I must actively remind students of our expectations. Jones and Jones offer many suggestions to aide in this process and I believe the

most important and pertinent ones engage the children. For instance, creating a play or acting out a situation where a rule might be violated and how the students will respond (Jones & Jones, 2012, pp. 184-185). A group of students may act out a situation where one student hits another. The students will then show how to act; tell the student to stop hitting them and tell the teacher. This will serve as a reminder to all the children and may be referenced later in the school year. Additionally, I believe that story time is a great way to review our standards. By reading books that emulate good behavior, I can reference the characters when issues arise. For example, remember how 'John' felt in the story when someone was hitting him? Do you think that 'Jane' feels the same way when you hit her? This will "teach lessons on following rules and procedures and the rewards from self-discipline" (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 183). Throughout the school year, these fun techniques will remind the children what is expected of them in a more informal and engaging way.

Since the classroom is supposed to mirror the community (North American, 2013), each of the students will have responsibilities in the classroom. The first method I want to implement is a system for arrival and attendance. It is important to know who has arrived for the day so that I can keep track of the students. It is often time consuming for the teacher to roll-call all of the names. As a result, I would create a large poster at the entrance of the classroom that has a picture of all of the students in the class stuck on with Velcro. When the student arrives each morning, he/she is responsible for taking his/her picture off of the poster and placing it in the designated box. This will easily allow me at the start of the day to see which students are missing by whose picture remains on the poster. Parents may need to help the children during the first week or so, but they will eventually learn to do this on their own.

The children will also be responsible for daily tasks that are within their skill set. These jobs will rotate weekly, with a chart that has each child's name and picture on a magnet and pictures corresponding to their task on the chart. Some jobs will require students to work together while others will be individual tasks. Some of these jobs will include setting up for snacks or lunch, cleaning after meals, line leader, door holder, someone responsible for turning on and off the lights, story time leader, and a helper for the teacher who puts notes or other important documents into each student's cubby. Jones and Jones (2012) state that "cooperative learning and real-world applications are crucial to a successful brain-based classroom" (p. 226). If children learn to have responsibilities at such a young age, they will understand what society will expect from them in the future.

Physical Arrangement/Environment

A rough estimate of what I would like my classroom to look like can be found in the appendix. I try and maintain sufficient space for the children to participate in circle time, social activities, art projects, and reading. I have also attempted to create "walkways and play spaces to eliminate accidental physical contact with people and object" (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 195). This allows the children to wander through the room and areas without disrupting others. Additionally, I have set up shelves near the tables to allow the children to reach most of the materials they want for certain activities or projects without assistance from the teacher. However, it is also important for the students to communicate with you, so "students will need to use language to request the materials" (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 206). Materials such as paint or glitter would be examples. The rest of the materials would be easily accessible and organized in a way that was easy for the students to know what belonged where for playing and cleaning up.

How a class is decorated is a large part of the Reggio approach. The North American Reggio Emilia Alliance states that "the environment is viewed as the third teacher, with the power to provoke curiosity and learning and encourage interaction" (2013). Lighting and natural materials are encouraged rather than plastic furniture and commercial posters (North American, 2013). I will have many bulletin boards that display student work both inside and outside the classroom so their creations decorate the classroom and the school as a community. Sprick et al. (2009) state "when their work is prominently displayed, it demonstrates to students that you are proud of their accomplishments and that you want to show others what they've done" (p. 75). Although I will create decorations at the beginning of the year, I understand that having the children display their work will give them more ownership and pride to the classroom appearance. After they have completed projects, I will swap out my decorations and replace it with their work.

In the class diagram, you can also see that there is plenty of space for the children to play, read and do artwork at their convenience. Book shelves are placed both near the couch and beanbag chair as well as near the large open rug for more quiet and private reading. I think that letting my students use their imaginations to create whatever they want is of the utmost importance. Although there will be times where we will have lessons, based on the student interests, there will also be plenty of time for children to engage in creative play.

The arrangement of the classroom must also lend itself to gaining the students attention and transitioning between activities. Getting the attention of the entire class is always a challenge during school. I always give the students a time indicator to let them know how much time they have left until we shift gears or need to clean up (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 206). Although this is a good start, I have never encountered a class who will voluntarily stop what they are doing

without further instruction. I believe that using a signal that will get their attention is the best way to change tasks. Although I would discuss which signal the children want, I would choose to use music to let them know to stop what they were doing and listen to me for further instructions (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 206). Transitioning between tasks can sometimes be complicated as well especially if the class is going from a high level of activity to a lower level. After using my attention signal, I believe it is helpful to have transition activities. Reading to the class is an easy and simple way to calm the students down before starting something new.

The beginning and end of class are structured around the large square rug. This gives me time to welcome all the students individually, preferably through song. Additionally, I allow the children to share with the class anything they think is important or just want to share. We will go over the plans for the day and ask the students if they have any special ideas or projects they would like to do. Reggio educators "believe that children, teachers and parents are partners in learning, and that children have the right and the ability to construct their own learning with the support and participation of teachers and parents" (North American, 2013). By asking the students what activities or designs they want to create, we become equals in the learning process. At the end of the day, coming back to the square rug will give students closure. It is important for students to understand what they have completed for the day which will "provide students with a sense of accomplishment and meaning in their school experience" (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 205). With this in mind I would want each of the students to take a minute or two to describe to the rest of the class something they enjoyed doing or showing the class their work (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 204). Overall as we can see, the physical arrangement and environment of the classroom is important to my management plan.

Student-Student Relationships/Peer Learning

As we have already learned, Reggio focuses on developing relationships between the teachers, children, parents, and community. However, they also want children's relationships with each other to blossom in order to encourage the creation of projects, investigations, and activities by the students (North American, 2013). If we encourage the students to collaborate with each other, their imaginations will flourish and so too will the curriculum. The Reggio Emilia approach is strengthened by intensifying relationships and interactions. They "seek to support those social exchanges that better ensure the flow of expectations, conflicts, cooperation, choices, and the explicit unfolding of problems tied to the cognitive, affective, and expressive realm" (Edwards et al., 1998, p. 45). I believe encouraging children's interactions with each other also begins to teach them that social relationships exist in the community. The children will learn that creating connections will help them throughout their life, and in my management plan I will help to foster that growth. The children will then "discover how communication enhances the autonomy of the individual and the peer group. The group forms a special entity tied together through exchange and conversation, reliant on its own ways of thinking, communicating, and acting" (Edwards et al., 1998, p. 45). I believe this to be an important lesson for the children to learn.

I will first focus on introducing the children so that they feel more comfortable with each other and know they are in a safe environment. By getting to know each other, the students will want to learn more and create a larger social group. One method in particular that I like for preschoolers is to give them a shoe box covered in paper that they can decorate to represent themselves (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 105). The students will then take home the shoe boxes and fill them with a few items that represent themselves such as pictures, books, or materials from

activities they participate in. For the next few weeks, we as a class will go over each child's box so that they can share their interests with the class.

Another method that will take place throughout the school year is interviews. Depending on the number of students in the classroom, I would like to assign each student a week where we interview them during circle time. Throughout the year each student would have a chance to sit in front of the class and answer questions such as what is your favorite color, what sports do you like, do you have any pets, or what kind of food do you like? (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 101). This allows the students to remain acquainted with each other over the course of the year. As Jones and Jones state (2012), lack of information is often a barrier to creating new friendships and students "tend to make assumptions and develop unrealistic fears or unfounded biases" (p. 95). Through both of these methods, I feel that the students will feel comfortable with each other and will be able to learn more from each other.

As the teacher, I must continue to help develop these peer relationships. I will "plan activities in which children can practice cooperating, sharing, and helping, including assigning classroom helper roles" (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 205). These helper roles have already been defined in the behavior standards/expectations section. I will be an active observer in the classroom and see which of the students migrate towards each other and which of them need a little encouragement. According to the Reggio style, I must respond to my observations by "asking questions, initiating face-to-face exchanges, redirecting activities, and modifying the way or intensity of their interaction with particular children" (Edwards et al., 1998, p. 45).

Awareness and observation of the classroom dynamic are of the utmost importance to ensure that students are developing as many positive relationships as possible. Through their communication with each other they will be able to learn from each other.

The Reggio approach also encourages documentation as much as possible. In the classrooms, "you will find documentation of the learning experiences and interactions of the children..." (North American, 2013). I believe this is an effective way to both display the students learning or activities as well as remind them, their parents, and the community what we have learned. Jones and Jones (2012) suggest creating a photo album, and whenever something special occurs it can be captured with a photograph (p. 109). They suggest allowing students to use the camera as well to document their learning which can then be displayed on bulletin boards (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 109). Since we live in such a digital age, I believe that creating a password protected, secure website for the class would benefit us as well. We would upload pictures and create a blog to allow the parents and community to see what we are doing. The students would have input on what the website looked and which activities we write about. At the end of the day, allowing children to go through the photos we took can help maintain the connections with each other, "reinforcing a sense of identity and creating positive feelings about the class" (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 109).

Creating a positive and accepting class dynamic has many benefits. Jones and Jones (2012) have found that "when students are liked by their peers, they experience a sense of significance, belonging, safety, and respect of others. Unless these basic personal needs are met, students will have less energy to expend in learning (p. 106). Since I want my students to expend as much energy as they can into learning, I will share one last technique I will use in my classroom. On one of the bulletin boards, I will put up a large tree, or any object the students can agree on. I will ask students to pay attention to the good things they see their friends doing. We will then create a "good deeds tree" and post leaves with the good deeds onto the tree (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 114). I will make sure to create times throughout the day for the students to tell

me what they witnessed and allow them to post it on the tree. At the end of each day, we can read some of the good things we did for each other and remind ourselves of the benefits of having good relationships. Overall, I will put a strong emphasis on student-student relationships as we have seen many benefits from it.

Student-Teacher Relationships

We will now shift our focus and explore the relationship between the student and the teacher. My main focus in this section will be to create positive relationships with all my students. Jones and Jones (2012) state that "positive student-teacher relationships are the foundation of effective classroom management which can reduce problem behaviors significantly" (p. 56). In order to continue using Reggio as a guide to my management plan, I must create and sustain meaningful relationships. According to the Reggio approach, "in order for children and adults to construct learning together and find meaning in the world around them, reciprocal dialogue and interaction must be established and maintained throughout the school community" (North American, 2013). I however, believe that this must be taken one step further by having positive and trusting relationships which will then create reciprocal dialogue and interaction. There are many steps and techniques that I will use to create helpful relationships.

Getting to know the students individually is an effective way to create a bond with each student. Before the year even begins, I will send a personal note addressed to each of the students welcoming them to the class and stating that I look forward to working with them and meeting them (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 70). In that letter will have a date and time for the student and their parents to come to the classroom before the year starts so that they are able to meet me and get a feel for the classroom. This will allow the student and me some time to interact and get to

know each other before the first day which is often overwhelming, especially for younger students. Throughout the remainder of the year, I plan to continue to send letters home with the student when they are successful at a task they were struggling with or on a special occasion. This will continue to enhance the personal relationship between us (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 68). I find that it is also important to show interest in each student throughout the day. Sprick et al. (2009) suggest that during independent work periods, the teacher circulates the class looking at students work, either offering praise or telling the student that she looks forward to their finished project (p. 280). This will make the student feel valued and will strengthen your relationship.

The most basic, yet effective way to benefit your relationship with the students is by greeting the students at the classroom door (Jones & Jones, 2012; Sprick et al., 2009). A simple statement such as 'good morning, John. How are you today?' will make them feel appreciated and valued. Giving positive statements on things you heard they did well on, an interest of theirs, or a high five are other ways to greet them which will create a good rapport (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 69). Throughout the day, I must continue to interact and bond with the students. One way of doing this is through a deposit and withdrawal system explained by Sprick et al. (2009);

Each time you interact with a student and show an interest in him or her as a person, you make a deposit. When you have invested enough, the student is more likely to want to follow your rules and strive to achieve ... in addition, if you make enough deposits, there will be reserve capital for those times when you may have to make a withdrawal because of student misbehavior. Whether the withdrawal consists of a gentle reprimand, a discussion, or a consequence designed to help improve the student's behavior, the more you have invested in the student, the more likely she is to understand that you are trying to help her. (p. 280)

A ratio of three positive statements for every one corrective response is suggested (Sprick et al., 2009, p. 298). Through maintaining a high ratio of positive to negative comments, the student will not feel as threatened when I have to discipline him as he would if there were no 'deposits' in his bank.

In order to continue to make deposits in each student's bank, we must communicate high expectations. Jones and Jones (2012) suggest giving specific and descriptive feedback for the processes in which the students were involved in, not their ability (p. 80). The feedback must be contingent, immediately following the behavior, it must be specific by describing the exact behavior being reinforced, and lastly it must be credible, meaning appropriate for the situation and the individual (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 80). The feedback I am giving must also fit my style of teaching (Sprick et al., 2009, p. 289). I will make sure that I am comfortable giving reinforcement so I do not sound fake. I know personally I am not the cheerleader type, so if I attempted to give overly energetic feedback, it would not be effective for the students.

Celebrations are another way to continue to develop positive student-teacher relationships. The celebrations will be small and intermittent but still effective. For younger students, we know that they need a more extrinsically valuable reward in order to be excited about the celebration (Sprick et al., 2009, p. 294). Simple things such as giving my students stickers, buttons, or certificates will help them feel valued and connected to me as a teacher.

Lastly, I will emphasize listening to the students and focusing on their needs and feelings. When you listen to a student, they know that you care about them and their welfare. Jones and Jones (2012) suggest using empathetic, nonevaluative listening which provides "the speaker with a sense that she or he has been clearly heard and that the feelings expressed are acceptable" (p. 83). I know that I personally want to help students when they bring problems or issues to me. However, I now know that the students often want to use you as a sounding board as opposed to getting a solution. When you listen carefully, and do not jump in to help them, the students are more likely to clarify their own problem and come up with their own solutions (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 82). As a preschool teacher, I will focus on listening to my students while being careful

not to judge them or interrupt them to help. I think in doing this, I will strengthen my relationship with each student.

Since I plan on basing my teaching off of the Reggio approach, it is important to maintain these relationships. They believe that an effective curriculum is child originated and teacher framed (Edwards et al., 1998, p. 240). When the children in the classroom do not have a positive relationship with the teacher, they do not feel valued, safe, or important, and they are less likely to help contribute to the class. Since the curriculum is not structured and is based on student ideas, it would be nearly impossible to have a successful school year without these relationships. As a result, I strive to implement all of the ideas I have mentioned to create positive relationships with my students.

Parent-Teacher Relationships

Some of my theories for developing parent-teacher relationships will overlap with the student-teacher relationship section. This includes the introductory letter. Although addressed to the student, it serves as a first point of communication with the parents as the parents will read the letter to the student. This letter also provides pertinent information such as which class the child will be in, a little bit about myself, and the date of our first meeting in the school. This meeting before the school year serves as a way for the students to gain comfort with their environment and teacher, but it also allows the parents to go over any issues or concerns they may have. Involving parents in their child's educational experience plays a significant role in the student's success (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 127). Having parents able to assist the students is beneficial to their success as well. Additionally, it provides me with an insight into the child and family structure, culture, or other special situations that may provide more help to me. I believe it

is important not only to initiate contact with parents at the beginning of the year but also to continue to communicate with them throughout the school year.

During the initial visit with the parents and students, I want to get to know the parents while the student is exploring the classroom. Sprick et al. (2009) suggest telling the parents about my background in teaching, a statement that I am looking forward to working with their child, getting to know the family, what my goals are for the year, when and how the family can contact me, and lastly, how I will be maintaining communication with them (p. 53). Research supports the need for a positive relationship between the teacher and parent. When there is dissonance between the two, student achievement is lower and their sense of hopelessness and anger is higher, while positive contact can lead to better achievement and behavior (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 132). My goal is to create open and reciprocal relationships with the parents.

The Reggio approach emphasizes how important it is to have open lines of communication with the parents. Education is considered to be a right and responsibility of parents and families (North American, 2013). Although parents are invited to participate in every possible way in Reggio classrooms, there will be some boundaries in my management plan. There will be many opportunities for the parents to come to the school to help with certain activities, field trips, or on holidays, but I believe it is important to have some distance from the school. The parents will continue to have contact with me after our initial visit, and I plan on implementing many strategies to make sure they feel welcomed.

As I mentioned, I will involve parents in the classroom but a little less than what is accepted in Reggio Emilia schools. Giving parents a volunteer information form to fill out in the beginning of the year is an efficient way to learn how the parents want to be involved (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 137). Sending home newsletters that describe what we are learning or working on

in the class is a great way to keep all the parents included (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 143). In addition, I can add a personal note to the parents to let them know that their child is doing well or that we may need to discuss an issue. As I mentioned earlier, I believe that shifting parts of the class to the digital age will benefit my management plan. Creating a website is easy for me and allows the parents to quickly find out the class happenings. The website can contain current projects, special events, field trip information, ways the parents can get involved, special recognition of a student, pictures and much more (Jones & Jones, 2012, p. 145). Documenting the children will give them a sense of accomplishment and excitement when they can look through the site later in time. The Reggio approach emphasizes documentation because we can witness the children learning as we progress (North American, 2013). By using a password protected, secure website, the parents and I will be able to understand what the children are doing and to help them do better.

Making contact and developing relationships with the parents is essential to a functional classroom, however I must make sure that all contact is documented (Jones & Jones, 2012; Sprick et al., 2009). Jones and Jones (2012) suggest making a file folder for each student to track not only the contact with the parents but also the method and if it was positive or negative (p. 145). This method allows you to see who you have contacted and who need to be contacted more often. Maintaining positive relationships with parents is essential not only in the child's development, but also if the child has a behavioral or academic problem, the parents may be more comfortable solving it with you.

I have thoroughly described the elements of my future preschool classroom management plan where I choose to incorporate some of the ideas and theories of the Reggio Emilia approach. I discussed the behavioral standards and expectations in my classroom as well as the physical

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arrangement and environment. I believe the students must feel comfortable in the class setting as well as know how to properly act and interact with other students. Additionally, I have gone over the importance of developing many relationships between peers, between the students and myself, and between the parents and myself. The Reggio approach stresses that "the community-based management in these centers and schools seeks to promote strong interaction and communication among educators, children, parents, and community" (Edwards et al., 1998, p. 108). By developing and maintain positive relationships, the students will benefit significantly. I look forward to implementing my management plan in a classroom, hopefully in the near future. I will leave with one last excerpt from the poem "A Hundred Languages of Children", written by Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilia approach that shows how I want my students to learn (Edwards et al., 1998):

The child is made of one hundred.

The child has

a hundred languages

a hundred hands

a hundred thoughts

a hundred ways of thinking

of playing, of speaking.

A hundred.

Always a hundred

ways of listening

of marveling, of loving

a hundred joys

for singing and understanding

a hundred worlds

to discover

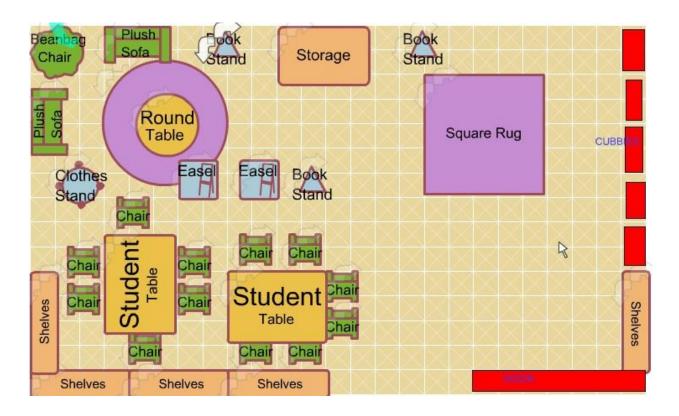
a hundred worlds

to invent

a hundred worlds

to dream. (p. 3)

Appendix



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