

CHAPTER ONE

Understanding The RCMPlan™

Teach the three Rs: Respect for yourself, Responsibility for your actions, and Remembering the rights of others.

—Robert Algozzine,
from *Teacher's Little Book of Wisdom*

A HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM SCENE

To Rosemary Lopez, the new social studies teacher at Washington High, the early morning hall was alive with the usual noises: lockers slamming, friends yelling one more reminder as they charged in opposite directions, and too many feet dragging on the tiled floor. Next to Ms. Lopez's classroom, Lisa and Jon were right behind the door, whispering very seriously and holding each other as they did yesterday and the days before that. Clearly, school was not their primary concern, and Ms. Lopez's greeting only heightened their whispering. The indifference to education here was palpable.

Placing her coffee on her desk, Ms. Lopez was pleased to see that almost everybody was at their assigned desks—except, of course, Lisa and Jon, still holding, and Yoko and Robert, who were arguing in the back of the room. With the bell, Ms. Lopez expected full attention from the class,

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and asked Thomas, sitting next to the door, to request Lisa and Jon's presence. Thomas, out of his seat before she even asked, attended to this regular early morning assignment. Yoko and Robert increased the volume of their exchange until Ms. Lopez could no longer restrain herself. She spoke to them as sternly as possible without showing her temper, yet was aware that her pitch was too high for effective intimidation; but somehow, she had to gain control. As the class watched nervously, she sarcastically asked Lisa and Jon if their marriage was faltering. The stratagem seemed to distract them. Yoko laughed, while Jon took offense and answered with a wisecrack about Ms. Lopez's ethnic group. His male friends hooted in approval . . . again, business as usual.

Ignoring the bait, Ms. Lopez asked the class to take out the individual assignments they had been working on for the last week. She could only hope that she had gotten on the right side of the contest by scoring a slight victory, temporary as it would be.

Damon waved his hand at Ms. Lopez and asked to present his materials first. Ms. Lopez looked around at the other hands, noting the expressions of those who did not volunteer as withdrawn and indifferent. She decided to ignore them; she could not afford to waste what little productive time she had to extract what they probably did not know anyway.

So, she quickly agreed to Damon's insistence, trying to move rapidly into the lesson without further distraction. Nevertheless, Robert asked, tauntingly, why he never got a chance to go first. Ms. Lopez saw her chance to embarrass Robert and asked Damon to allow Robert to demonstrate his knowledge. Robert said that he and Yoko had done the work together. Ms. Lopez replied that she was not interested in group work. She wanted to know what he was capable of—what he had done. Robert responded with sarcasm; this time directed at Damon. Kabir, Damon's friend, stared hard at Robert. Ms. Lopez felt her control become increasingly precarious.

Pushing hard ahead, Ms. Lopez proffered a short introduction, describing how she expected the class to carry on the discussion. The "squawk box" interrupted the effort with innocuous announcements. Ms. Lopez started over, clearly frustrated by the further delay. The class took precious minutes to refocus. Ms. Lopez then asked Damon to read his paper on the assigned issue of world population. She hoped the material would engage the class in something she considered important and

immediate. She knew she was taking a chance, but the topic was in the news and certainly entwined in the study of world cultures. Within a few minutes, she realized she was right and wrong. The class was listening to Damon, but the class was also getting agitated as he confronted their preconceptions. They increasingly attacked his position and virtually everything he was saying.

Ms. Lopez recognized she needed to keep a tight lid on the discussion—quite opposite to what she had hoped. These discussions were laced with threads of racial, ethnic, and class conflict. She knew the backgrounds of her students; and, for many, she could guess their social and economic status. But as she looked at her class more closely, she realized that she did not really know them; she had not shared their experiences. She did not understand the extraordinary diversity of background, ability, and interest that confronted her. What could she do with this situation to make it work? Did she have the training? Did she have the skill? Could she succeed? What could she do to reclaim classroom management and teach effectively?

THE RCMPAN™

The classroom scene illustrates a few moments of the complex dynamics and inherent potential for conflict in middle or secondary school classrooms in the United States today. Undoubtedly, this image is disquieting, but real. Compared to a decade ago, societal and personal conditions are more complex, harder to grasp, and more difficult to control. The nation's public schools absorb the pace and degree of these changes, and the individual classroom teacher stands at the core of the expected change process. The teacher likely depicts the perfect panacea capable of clearly manifesting the stability needed for behavioral and academic changes in our students. It is in this context that we introduce The Responsible Classroom Management Plan (The RCMPan™).

The RCMPan™ is a schoolwide, behavior-correcting plan that enhances a school's capacity to safely and effectively educate all students. The RCMPan™ applies evidence-based support systems to maximize opportunities for teaching academics and prosocial behaviors. The following characteristics are embedded

in the plan (Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2005; Sugai, 2000; Sugai & Horner, 2002; Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000):

- A team-based approach to identify, implement, and evaluate best practices, including administrators, teachers, school psychologists, other support personnel, and parents.
- Support for improvement efforts with budget, personnel, and resource allocations.
- Use of research-validated practices.
- Proactive behavioral instruction, teaching and modeling appropriate social behavior, with plenty of positive feedback.
- Opportunities for students to practice the expected behavior, aiming for fluency.
- A continuum of behavioral support to increase the intensity of the intervention as the intensity of the problem increases.
- Data-based systems and schoolwide, behavioral goals to guide decisions and keep staff informed on current guidelines along with what is and is not working.

Promoting good citizenship by developing responsible students who can live productively in a democratic and multicultural society is a key goal of responsible classroom management (RCM). This involves acting responsibly and practicing socially acceptable behavior. Responsible students also self-correct inappropriate behavior after they experience natural consequences for any inappropriate acts. William Glasser, in his book *Reality Therapy* (1990), defines responsibility as follows:

. . . the ability to fulfill one's needs, and to do so in a way that does not deprive others of the ability to fulfill their needs. . . . A responsible person also does that which gives him a feeling of self-worth and a feeling that he is worthwhile to others. (p. xi)

Glasser believes students have certain needs that must be met by either the home or the school. When students behave inappropriately, it is because (according to Glasser) their basic needs are not being met. If the home does not satisfy those needs, then the school must try to meet them. Accordingly, the school and teachers must assist students in being successful in what they undertake—in their effort to learn,

and in their pursuit of self-worth. It follows that if a student misbehaves in school, then teachers must somehow help the student meet unmet needs. If a student cannot adjust and behave more productively, then teachers must find ways to alter their own behavior, or the structure and contents of the classroom, to assist the student.

Taking a similar position to Glasser, RCM posits that teachers should not try to alter a student's world and allow the student to avoid the consequences of misbehavior. Changing the school environment is not the same as altering rules and expectations so that a student can avoid injury to self-worth. Rather, teachers should help students make value judgments about what causes a problem. When students judge their misbehavior and commit themselves to change, they will learn responsibility. Once a student commits to change, a teacher can accept no excuse from the student for not maintaining the commitment.

The RCMPlan™ ensures that a student is not permitted to escape responsibility for misbehavior. This does not mean that a teacher should punish or praise a student for a certain act, since this disconnects the student from directly accepting responsibility for the behavior. While punishment permits the student to focus on the punishment and the consequent feelings of revenge, praise motivates the student to seek similar commendation for any and all activity. Both practices thereby delay self-motivation. As an alternative, teachers must use logical consequences for the student to correct the misbehavior and develop responsibility.

BECOMING A SUCCESSFUL RCM TEACHER

To be successful, RCM teachers must analyze their own behavior to determine where they might inject unfavorable behaviors and attitudes into the classroom. Tendencies toward authoritarian or permissive control, prejudice, ignorance of the correct methodology, indecisiveness, or uncertainty about the goals of RCM will each undermine the RCM classroom and school.

According to the RCM perspective, external rewards in the form of reinforcement, or even casual praise, delay development of the responsible student. In a dynamic, creative, and uncontrived classroom, a teacher depends on the excitement from tapping a student's inherent need to know, learn, and very importantly, belong. RCM teachers derive a significant portion of stable behavior from excellence

in instructional preparation and execution. Successful RCM teachers, then, carefully entwine **standards** and **guidelines** into the instructional process alongside **expected behaviors** supported by **natural and logical consequences**.

The Three Major RCM Principles

While The RCMPlan™ integrates many educational beliefs, three major principles maximize student success. These are listed and briefly addressed here, with much greater detail offered in later chapters about how these principles work in harmony to achieve all the desired behaviors discussed to this point.

The basic-program principles of The RCMPlan™ include:

1. Responsibility is taught and incorporated instructionally within a warm and inviting classroom.

The RCM approach to classroom management develops responsible students who can live productively in a democratic and multicultural society. Within the RCM classroom, responsibility is taught and then expected. Teachers, and the school organization, should implement democratic principles in their teaching and leadership roles. Human equality, dignity, self-worth, participation in decision making at all levels, and acceptance of the consequences of behavior should all be concepts integrated into the curriculum and consistently taught.

The school and classroom environment, and the concomitant instructional effort, embody the RCM approach. In a safe and inviting environment, a student feels secure and protected, and is then prepared to learn. The more positive the experience of the classroom, the greater the opportunity the teacher has to guide the students toward responsible behavior. Organization of space and time, format and presentation of instructional materials, the demeanor of the teachers, and the amount and kind of preparation are all critically important to success in an environmentally sound school and classroom. The RCM approach requires a teacher to clearly state the objectives of all planned classroom activity. This outcome-based approach to instruction necessitates the teacher's careful preparation and constant evaluation of student behavior. Precise and sensitive instructional guidance builds the foundation for responsible student behavior.

2. Standards, guidelines, and expected behaviors replace rigid school and classroom rules.

The RCMPlan™ does not use rules. Instead, the teacher uses standards, guidelines, and expected behaviors. Standards define the general direction of the desired behavior. Guidelines provide specific directions to successfully meet those standards, and expected behaviors represent grade level and developmentally appropriate actions to follow. In the RCM classroom, teachers act swiftly, consistently, and unemotionally to instill desirable behavior. As students learn to internalize responsible behavior, their self-esteem matures, and they increasingly gain internalized control over their own behavior.

3. Consequences teach students to self-correct inappropriate behaviors and assume responsibility for their actions.

Logical consequences link a student's inappropriate action to violated expected behavior, breaking the guideline and thus the standard. A logical consequence is not punishment. Instead, more realistic consequences result from not doing what is expected. For example, one guideline states, "The student is to come to school prepared to learn." In discussing this expectation, the teacher gives a directive for students to complete homework on a daily basis. Every student is expected to do the homework, with no exceptions. If a student comes in without his homework, he is not penalized with a low grade. Instead, he may be asked when he would like to complete the assignment—at break, during lunch, or after school. Those may be his only choices or there may be others. Specifically, the teacher may assign another consequence if she believes the initial one would not change the inappropriate behavior with this particular student. What happens if he doesn't have his homework in the future? One possibility is to simply repeat the consequence. Repeating a consequence can work well and proves that as teacher, she is serious. If the repeated consequence does not work, the teacher must move to something different with this student.

Individual Treatment

Within the RCM classroom, students are considered individuals who must be treated fairly and equally, but not necessarily the

same. No parent disciplines two or three students in the same manner. For one student, time in her room is punishment and to another student, it is as a reward. Discipline, then, has to be personalized. Teachers achieve this with RCM and receive far less parental complaints than with other programs.

RCM fosters and acknowledges student performance and personal responsibility, and does not use bribery and predetermined rewards. Too often, teachers attempt to motivate students to learn and behave acceptably in the classroom with external rewards. This process is time-consuming, and often results in students who rely solely on extrinsic rewards to accomplish what should be intrinsically important to them. In contradistinction to this scheme, the RCM approach to classroom management uses high expectations and reasonable guidelines and standards to develop intrinsic motivation.

Students practice internal-behavior control rather than have their behavior controlled externally. Strict rules for obedience insulate students from personal responsibility—a result contrary to RCM purpose. When a student is taught to act autonomously, according to agreed-upon standards, the student acts responsibly. Responsible behavior does not require enforcement, and will likely be repeated without the application of external inducements. Much of the problem in our nation today with college graduates entering the workforce and demanding personal entitlements, we believe, stems from continuous bribes and rewards for completing assignments and/or simply behaving as expected.

A MODEL FOR IMPROVING INSTRUCTION AND BEHAVIOR

The thinking of humanist psychologists Abraham Maslow and Mortimer Adler, and cognitive developmentalists such as Erik Erikson, Richard Havinghurst, Lawrence Kolberg, and Jean Piaget, underlies The RCMPlan™. Based on this foundation, RCM shares some of the integrated ideas with the programs of Dreikurs, Nelson, and Glasser, but in a more practical and individualized manner.

RCM is based on the notion that every student moves through several common developmental stages. These stages determine, to

a high degree, the behaviors, attitudes, cognitive capabilities, and physical characteristics that a student exhibits at any particular time. These proclivities, in combination with interactions with parents, siblings, peers, and teachers, greatly influence the pattern of behavior that a student adopts. To assure that students grow and prosper, and develop into healthy and well-balanced adults, every student needs unconditional love, security, and the certainty of belonging.

The ability to find workable solutions to life's problems is fundamental to a student's well-being. Within a hierarchy of learned behavior, the RCM model helps develop a capacity to solve problems. Students must be taught to examine and solve the many social and academic problems they will encounter during their growth. Accordingly, they must be given the opportunity to creatively and independently explore the world, define and achieve goals, and feel success upon which they will build self-assuredness, self-esteem, and ultimately, a strong self-concept.

RCM assumes that competent and responsible adults can teach most students, even so-called "problem" students and regardless of a student's socioeconomic or family history, to behave responsibly in the classroom, in school, and in the community at large. Behaving responsibly, according to RCM, means, in part, acting in accordance with an internalized set of values and beliefs, and with acceptance of the consequences of an act, whether positive or negative. On a continuum conveying degrees of responsible behavior, more responsible students self-correct behavior, use an internal locus of control, accept the consequences of their behavior, and follow guidelines to a greater degree than students who are less responsible. But regardless of where students fall on the continuum, most students can learn to behave responsibly. The real challenge lies in dealing with those few students—less than 5 percent of most classrooms—who exhibit anger, aggression, and mistrust in their behavior and attitudes. Their noncompliant behavior can be highly disruptive, and require exceptional treatment to make the classroom a viable operation. The RCM program addresses the needs of many of these students with the **intensive care unit** (a therapeutic removal from class, isolation, and counseling) and the team-led **discipline review committee**, both to be discussed later in this chapter. These tools use direct parent contact and establish two

levels of contracts, **behavioral improvement agreements**, to include behaviors not responding to the previous plans. These tools function with appropriate consequences ranging from isolation, suspension, expulsion, and even entry into the juvenile justice system.

The Functions of the Discipline Review Committee

Classroom teachers use the intensive care unit (ICU) as a major consequence for significant disruptive classroom behavior, or intentional disrespect to a teacher or school employee. Students are removed from the setting where the offense has occurred and admitted to ICU. No work is permitted and the student must sit quietly and reflect upon the undesirable behavior. After the first visit to the ICU, the teacher meets with the student to establish procedures for avoiding a return to the ICU. Most students never return for a second visit. The discipline review committee (DRC), including parents and school administrators, monitors any rare second or third visits. No student is sent for a fourth time to ICU. Instead, a more severe consequence occurs. Usually by this time, the school is dealing with the top ten or so offenders in the entire school.

The DRC members, appointed by the principal or elected by the faculty, supervise all stages of The RCMPan™. The DRC approves the overall school standard and guidelines, as recommended by the faculty and staff, and the chair serves as the major contact between teachers, students, and parents required to attend an ICU meeting. For each set of guidelines—such as behavior in the hall, parking lot, cafeteria, and other locations—a *specific* consequence correlates with the violation, including procedures for staff to follow. Prior to implementation or modification, the DRC must present the school's plan to the administration, faculty, and staff.

In the next step, individual teachers at the various grade levels and in special areas establish (or use the three we suggest) classroom guidelines (based upon school standards) and a pool of logical consequences for the classroom. After the first year, the faculty might seek student input as appropriate for revisions. This input allows students to be more involved in decision making and models participatory citizenship. Once the classroom plans are added to the school plan, the administration and staff establish an intensive

care unit, prepare space, and develop a supervisory schedule. Two personnel are recommended to supervise the ICU at all times. The role of the DRC will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

The ability to find workable solutions to life's problems is fundamental to a student's well-being. Within a hierarchy of learned behavior, the RCM model supports this capacity to solve problems. Students must learn to examine and solve the many social and academic problems that they will encounter during their growth. Accordingly, they must have the opportunity to creatively and independently explore the world, define and achieve goals, and experience success. Upon this, they will build self-assuredness, self-esteem, and, ultimately, a strong self-concept.

AN INVITATION TO CHANGE: THE RCMPAN™ INVENTORY

Before beginning the RCM approach to schoolwide classroom management, reflecting on beliefs about students, teaching, and learning will help clarify one's professional knowledge and attitudes about the underlying principles of RCM. The RCMPan™ inventory assists in this process, and requires a simple response from "agree" to "disagree," with "uncertain" gauging an uncommitted response.

Once the inventory is complete, compare your results to the "ideal responses" we suggest. Strong general agreement on the items suggests an understanding and compliance with the fundamental principles and practices of RCM. A strong general disagreement signals either misunderstanding or rejection of RCM principles. Uncertain responses indicate a lack of clarity surrounding RCM, the meaning of a particular statement, or one's own values and practices. This is a crucial step because potential users must understand and agree with the driving principles of RCM for it to be successfully implemented. By examining responses, you can identify areas of concern and further explore the underpinnings of RCM before proceeding.

If you don't feel prepared to take the inventory at this time, revisit it after you finish other chapters or the entire book. Use the inventory individually or use it with the entire faculty for training, keeping in mind that it is not just an inventory—it is a teaching tool.

The RCMPan™ Inventory

Item	Rating		
	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
1. Students and adults move through common developmental stages that affect their behavior.			
2. Teachers should ignore student misbehaviors and smile or wink when acceptable behavior is observed.			
3. Students should be taught problem-solving methods.			
4. Self-assuredness, self-esteem, and a strong self-concept are fundamental to success in school.			
5. “Problem” or “dysfunctional” students cannot learn responsibility and should be separated from “normal” students.			
6. A poor socioeconomic and family history make it impossible for a student to learn responsible behavior.			
7. Students should rely on extrinsic motivation to control their behavior.			
8. Teachers should reinforce acceptable student behavior with items exchangeable for privileges, fun activities, and events.			
9. Responsible students self-correct their behavior, use an internal locus of control, and accept the consequences of their behavior.			
10. Teachers should reward a student immediately and frequently, especially at the beginning when the student is becoming familiar with correct behavior.			
11. Only a small number of students in almost any classroom require serious attention for misbehavior.			
12. Teachers should model appropriate values and behavior.			
13. Teachers should use positive and negative reinforcements to modify the behavior of students within the classroom environment.			

Item	Rating		
	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
14. Teachers should carefully monitor their own behavior in the classroom.			
15. Teachers should avoid correcting a misbehaving student to prevent damage to the student's self-esteem.			
16. When a student expresses dismay for being denied satisfaction of a demand, teachers should change their own behavior to meet the needs of the student.			
17. Teachers' guidance precludes students from experiencing the consequences of their behavior.			
18. Students should be allowed to experience the natural consequences of their behavior.			
19. An authoritarian approach to discipline permits a student to develop an internal locus of control.			
20. Teachers should not be concerned with developing democratic and multicultural values.			
21. Human equality, dignity, self-worth, and participation in decision making at all levels should be taught by teachers and integrated into the curriculum.			
22. The school and classroom environment are not important for developing a responsible student.			
23. A safe and inviting classroom is irrelevant to a student's success in school.			
24. Teachers should clearly state the objectives of their instruction.			
25. Teachers should praise students for exceptional performance.			
26. Teachers should not punish a student for misbehavior.			
27. Punishment and consequences are not the same.			

(Continued)

22 RESPONSIBLE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT, GRADES 6–12

(Continued)

Item	Rating		
	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
28. Encouragement and praise will have the same positive effects on a student's attitudes and behavior.			
29. A responsible student relies solely on external rewards to motivate learning.			
30. External rewards are essential tools in controlling student behavior.			
31. Teachers should not rely on strict rules to control a student's behavior.			
32. Expressing strong emotions when dealing with a student's classroom misbehavior effectively controls that behavior.			
33. Teachers should closely monitor students for conformance to a code of discipline.			
34. Students should be involved in the development of behavioral standards and guidelines.			
35. Teachers should eliminate negative consequences so that a student enjoys school.			
36. Students should question the rules established by the teacher or school.			
37. Within the context of the classroom, students should not be expected to derive solutions to problems based on their rational understanding of their inner selves.			
38. Responsible behavior must be constantly reinforced with external inducements.			
39. A responsible student has internalized acceptable standards of behavior.			
40. Forcing a student to behave allows the student to internalize acceptable standards of behavior.			
41. A student is usually unwilling to cooperate unless forced to do so.			

Item	Rating		
	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
42. Students should take an active role in developing and implementing learning experiences in the classroom.			
43. The rational, inner self is a myth.			
44. Students should be taught to act autonomously.			
45. A teacher's demeanor has substantial effects on a student's behavior in the classroom.			
46. Teachers should not use popcorn, candy, or other enjoyable items to positively reinforce an appropriate behavior.			
47. Students should be permitted to experience the consequences of their behavior.			
48. Teachers should arrange rewards to increase acceptable behavior.			
49. When students are treated equally, they are always treated fairly.			
50. Teachers should reward desirable behavior often and lessen the rewards as the desirable behavior is expressed.			
51. Students require a sense of security and belonging to function in school effectively.			
52. Due to misbehavior, students must sometimes be physically removed from the classroom environment and placed in a time-out area.			
53. To control behavior, teachers should direct a student to repeat an unacceptable behavior until the student is unwilling to continue doing so.			
54. Teachers should provide incremental rewards for small and incremental improvements in behavior.			
55. Most students do not require strong disciplinary actions in the classroom.			

Key to The RCM Plan™ Inventory

Agree: 1, 3, 4, 9, 11, 12, 14, 18, 21, 24, 26, 27, 31, 34, 36, 39, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 51, 52, and 55.

Disagree: 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 35, 37, 38, 40, 41, 43, 48, 49, 50, 53, and 54.

LOOKING AHEAD

Chapter 1 presented a scenario similar to the real-life classrooms teachers must face daily, followed by a description of the traditional classroom plans that focus on external-control models, such as fears or bribes, in comparison to The RCMPlan™—a well-tested, internal-control model that allows students to correct undesirable behaviors. From here, the various roles and functions of the discipline review committee (DRC) were explained. Chapter 2 next presents procedures for setting up the instructional and classroom management environment.