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Philosophy of Classroom Management and Discipline

As an elementary teacher not only are we teaching children academics but we are teaching them about life. How to interact with others and how people differ from us. Education is key to forming respectable citizens that will make up our communities one day. A quote by Martin Luther King better addresses the importance of education. “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.”

I think good teaching and being a good teacher go hand in hand. “Teaching” is only one aspect of being a good teaching however most of the time it is the part that is focused on the most. The government, the state, school districts and a lot of parents look at test scores and grades to assess achievement of students thus assessing the effectives of teachers. But scores and grades don’t always show growth and growth is the most important part of education. If a teacher is promoting growth in their students then they are being an effective teacher. An effective teacher is a good teacher.

There is no single way to define a “good teacher.” The main idea about being a good teacher is that you adapt to the environment that you are in and the children that you are teaching. The rules and procedures you used for your class last year might not work in your class this year. Teachers that are adaptable, resourceful, patient, creative and support are more likely to produce effect

teaching because they have, respect, control and the attention of their students. This is something that I feel is encouraged in the text, “The First Six Weeks of School” by *The Responsive Classroom*. A positive, repetitive routine in the beginning of the year allows teachers to incorporate all of those attributes in their teaching. The best kinds of teachers are teachers that can teach in any school no matter the location of the school or the demographic of the students.

Growing up in a middle class suburb, I was very fortunate with the opportunities that were presented to me throughout my entire public school education and not only has it shaped me into the person that I am today but the way I choose to teach in a classroom.

The area I lived in was very diverse and I think that allowed me to be familiar with all different types of races and ethnicities, which has transferred into my teaching strategies. Inclusion is key in a classroom that I run as well as mutual respect and understanding.

It is interest though because growing up middle class it wasn’t really addressed that other people don’t have the kinds of opportunity we have. Everyone I went to school with lived in middle class homes. We all got to go see the newest movie out, we got to bring tons of school supplies to school with cool colors and designs and our PTA put on the best after school events.

It wasn’t until college where I was personally exposed to inner city schooling where most of the students were living below the poverty line. It is rare that teachers from my background learn about the differences of suburban and

inner city classrooms, but there are big differences and the way you manage your classroom should be adjusted. I strongly believe in my students having a voice but also having responsibilities. C Emdin brought the idea of classroom roles to my attention in the text, For White Folks That Teach in the Hood. It talks about assigning nonacademic roles to the students to instill responsibilities and create a “cosmopolitan” classroom as Emdin states. “The cosmopolitan classroom is a space where each student is a full citizen, responsible for how well the class meets the collective academic, social and emotional goals.” This is a very student lead approach but holds them accountable for their actions. An idea I would definitely consider using my classroom, especially in an inner city class because it makes the students feel important and needed, something they don’t always get at home.

Another strategy that I will unquestionably be using in my classroom is incorporating morning meetings into my class routine. Morning meetings reach students in elementary school of all ages, no matter their socioeconomic status, grade level or gender. It is simply a structured and productive way to start the mornings that provides students with support and holds them to a specific expectation.

The idea of a morning meeting comes from, “The First Six Weeks of School,” from the Responsive Classroom. This strategy is probably the most useful tool I have acquired from the text. They break it up into four sections, greeting, sharing, group activity, and morning message. I think the most

important part of the day is when the students first walk into the door and having that morning time organized and productive shows what is expected out of the rest of the day.

Morning meeting should be done as a whole group activity. I believe it is best accomplished at the carpet than at the student's desks because it feels more inclusive. It starts off with the greeting, this can be as simple as saying hello to every student or as complex as having them greet some of their classmates and ask them a question. It is a way to make sure each student is addressed every morning. This helps build a relationship with all students and to show them that they matter. Something a lot of teachers don't think about is making sure that all their students feel important in the classroom. As stated in, *Who Am I? Who are my Students?* By Parker J. Palmer, "If you don't know who your students are you can't teach them." The article talks about the different kinds of relationships teachers have with their students and how it affects teaching and learning. It is proven that teachers who have a positive relationship with their kids have an overall caring classroom community advancing students both academically and socially (Palmer, pg, 6).

I believe the most effective teaching strategy is a teacher lead classroom with room for student voice and opinion. Ultimately the teacher is the person that makes the decision but allowing students to voice their opinions supports the student-teacher relationship. In my practicum classroom I wish I saw a more solid classroom management procedure. I think if the idea of morning meeting would

have been implemented into her class the productivity levels would have vastly improved. In the mornings students were often sitting around with nothing to do which lead to a lot of day dreaming or fighting. I think a morning meeting would provide more structure to their mornings. A lot of my students in practicum deal with some kind of trauma in their lives so the sharing portion of morning meeting would allow them to have their voices heard, something that a lot of the time goes unnoticed at home. I think an energizer and group activity during morning meeting would allow them to release their pent up energy in the beginning of the day. Activities like the laughing handkerchief and fish greetings from *The Responsive Classroom,* are fun silly ways to release energy, forget about baggage from home and to promote class cohesiveness. The message at the end of the meeting is a great way to set goals for the students and makes them aware of what is expected of them that day.

Open dialogue, clear rules and thought out procedures promote a strong learning environment. With out the right foundation it is hard to create interactive, creative and diverse lessons because students aren't able to listen or behave long enough to actually learn from a new learning strategy. With an organized, thought out, engaging and supportive classroom management plan, teachers will be able to achieve the most efficient and effective learning environment. If one management plan doesn't work, try another until you find one that fits with you and your class.

Works Cited

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