Classroom Management Philosophy

Classroom management, the scariest aspect of teaching in the eyes of many teachers; yet I feel prepared and excited to embark on this journey and test my theories in a real classroom. Classroom managements means the way in which a classroom is set up; including, but not limited to, the physical set-up, the rules and guidelines, the teacher personality, and the consequences of rule breaking or misbehavior. In my opinion, the classroom is meant to be fun but have very specific strong guidelines that have consequences when those lines are crossed.

My personality is an odd mixture of strict and easy going. I know how to have a good time, but I also expect rules to be followed. I grew up in the belief that rules are there to protect and train you. They protect you by cutting out the possibility of not only physical danger but also mental abuse by other students and teachers. Rules train you by preparing you for the real world; at some point all these students will enter the real world where when rules are broken the consequences are much more severe than a slap on the hand and a detention. My personality meshes well with an open light-hearted classroom where students will be accepted and helped as much as they need. I have been trained for two years in being open and accepting of students by being an RA in my residence hall on campus.

My experience as an RA has also helped shape my ideas of discipline. We are taught to follow through no matter what; if you threaten a punishment to residents and then don't follow through on that punishment then you have lost all control over your floor. The residents know what they can walk over an RA and they will not hesitate to do

so if they feel that it is possible. This is the same in the high school classroom. If you tell a student that they must stop talking during class time and warn them that the next time it happens they will receive a detention; then the next time it happens you are essentially required to follow through on the detention. If the students know that you will not follow through on punishments, you will have to become a strict disciplinarian and a "mean" teacher to regain control over the classroom; yet even that may not work.

This belief in maintaining control of your classroom is echoed in the theorist Harry Wong. He agrees that it is easier to maintain good classroom behavior than to change inappropriate behavior once it has established itself in your classroom. He believes, and I agree, that the best way to accomplish this is by being clear with the students. Have a few clear rules and guidelines with consistent consequences for misbehavior; by doing this, the students become accustomed to following the rules and it cuts down on the misbehavior that you would have to deal with if you did not have rules and consistent penalties. Wong also points out that it is important to reinforce the rules and remind the students of what they are required to do in your classroom. This can be accomplished through the posting of the classroom rules and procedures as well as following through when misbehavior occurs.

Another theorist who has good ideas on how to prevent misbehavior in the classroom is Fredric Jones. Jones believes that nonverbal language is very important in the classroom and I agree. From experience as both a teacher and as a student I know that when a teacher is standing by my desk or walking around the room, I am less likely to misbehave and attempt to get away with different forms of mischief. Jones tells us that it is important to utilize our body language, facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and

physical proximity to retain control. When teaching a lesson and small misdeeds occur it is more effective to use your teacher look, a walk by, or a simple gesture to put an immediate stop to the behavior than it is to stop the class and have a long drawn out disagreement. By using your nonverbal language it is possible to continue teaching and helping the students learn while still keeping a firm hand on the reins of the classroom.

Another theorist who has good ideas on how to minimize misbehavior and maximize learning is William Glasser. He teaches that students are less likely to misbehave when the curriculum has meaning and is enjoyable for them. He promotes the idea of allowing the students some choice in what they study and what they are most interested in learning. I agree with this position. If the majority of the class is engaged and interested in the lesson, the chance of behavioral problems is lower than if the class is bored and uninterested. I plan on having survey for the students to fill out to tell me what they are most interested in learning for the school year and then take their ideas and create some of my lessons based on that feedback.

Although Glasser, Wong, and Jones have good ideas on how to prevent misbehavior, only one theorist appealed to me when it came to confronting and disciplining students after misbehavior has occurred. That theorist is Albert and his theory of Cooperative Discipline. One of the most important points that he made was to focus on the behavior NOT the student. Make sure that you avoid escalating the situation at all costs, especially if it is only a minor offense, such as talk in class. First use your nonverbal language to stop the behavior and after the lesson is ended and the other students are busy with other projects approach the student and remind him about the rule of respect. By confronting the student later you are able to allow the student to save face

in front of the class and you avoid having hot tempers when you finally talk to the student. Remind the student that although you appreciate his outgoing personality, you would like it displayed at appropriate times, like class discussions, and not while others are talking. But Albert also offers ideas for confronting more severe confrontations. I believe that the most important part of this section is to remove the audience. By removing the audience and taking the student to the hall or pulling them aside later on, you remove the necessity for the student to protect their "rep" in front of the other students. You are more likely, but not guaranteed, to have a more calm discussion over the behavior and what will be done to correct it. I think that it is important to remind the student what rules they broke, whether those are school wide rules or classroom rules, so that they may have something to refer back to and help them know that what they did was wrong. Albert also tells us to teacher time-out or a student time-out. This will facilitate the tempers cooling down so that when the misbehavior is confronted it is done with a cool temper and reason.

So although classroom management is one of the hardest aspects of teaching, I believe that I am ready to test out my theories on the real classroom to see how they work out. I believe that a fun classroom with strict guidelines and specific punishments when those lines are crossed is the best way to manage your classroom. The guidelines (i.e. rules) for each classroom should reflect the attitudes of the teacher and classroom.