Classroom Management Philosophy Paper

Morgan Wanner

University of Mary

Abstract

In this paper, I discuss the elements of classroom management that I will be using in my own classroom in the near future. We learned about several different authors and various teaching methods regarding classroom management. Many of these sources are cited throughout my paper. We gained insight into a wide range of classroom management techniques from both ends of the spectrum. These vary from the discipline and punishment approaches to the love and logic approach. I agree with some of the classroom management ideas from both sides of the spectrum, but mainly in combination with one another. My beliefs on this will be conferred in my paper.

Classroom Management Philosophy Paper

There are many powerful aspects of a teacher that strongly play into the learning and achievement levels of his/her students. Classroom management is one of those fundamental aspects of an effective and positive learning environment. The rate at which a classroom is managed directly correlates with the rate at which students will learn and remember the information they are being taught from day to day.

I believe that the first week of school is one of the most important in maintaining a well-managed classroom for the entire school year. Rules and expectations will be in place and the students will be made aware of them the minute they walk in the door. On the first day of school, I will have my students work in groups to think of their own set of rules for the classroom. As a class, we will then pick a few rules to keep and post for the rest of the school year. We will have a class discussion about each rule and talk about why each rule is important to follow. I will go over the routines and procedures for all activities and transitions at the start of the school year, as well as the student expectations for each lesson. My students will know exactly what they need to be doing at any given time because we will be going over all of the classroom procedures on a regular basis.

When my students take their first steps into my classroom, they will know that they are accepted. They will know that they are loved and cared for as both a student and as an individual. I am becoming more and more aware of the diversity that exists in students’ home lives and I will try my best to let each of my students know and hear what they are not receiving at home. My classroom will be a place of positive character. My students will be taught to focus on the positives of other students and situations rather than the negatives. I will acknowledge and praise the students who are demonstrating good behavior in the class, instead of drawing negative attention to the students who are misbehaving or not doing their job.

After the first week of school, student engagement will be a constant work in progress. This is another huge aspect of a well-managed classroom. Students need to be participating and paying attention during the teacher’s instructional time in order to avoid distractions and/or poor behaviors. The first step I will take towards maintaining student engagement is using a wide variety of teaching strategies and assigning various types of work. If I always use worksheets, group discussions, or one specific form of teaching, I know that my students will get bored very quickly. When I have my own classroom, I am going to teach in all modalities as well as assign many different types of work including group projects, partner discussions, experiments, presentations, worksheets, etc. I am also aware that some of my lessons may require me to stir curiosity in my students prior to teaching the new information. In these instances, I will use unusual information and effective questioning to grab student attention (Marzano, 2011).

During long days of instruction, it is going to be very hard for my students to stay focused for the entire length of the lesson. I think that brain breaks are a great tool for situations where students are having a hard time paying attention. I plan on having a decorative jar in my classroom with a collection of brain breaks in it. These brain gyms can be anything from songs, to dances, to actions and movements, to stretches, to anything in between. When my students have been sitting and working for a long time, I will choose one of these brain breaks or have the class leader choose one to get the students up and moving. This is essential for young minds to allow blood and oxygen to flow to the brain which will give them a fresh start throughout the day (Marzano, 2011).

Although there are many rules and precautions that teachers set in place to prevent misbehaviors from occurring in their classroom, there will never be a school year where these behaviors will be entirely avoided. Specific students, especially those with a medical diagnosis or a past history, will be significantly more likely to act out in the classroom. These behaviors may be unavoidable in certain situations; teachers need to be prepared and know what to do when they occur. I have been exposed to many bouts of aggressive, angry, and noncompliant behavior at my current job and I know how difficult these situations can be to handle. The most important thing I have learned is to stay calm during these situations. Reacting in these times will only give students more power (Rebora, 2013). One strategy I will use when these behaviors arise in my classroom is to give the student two choices; both choices will be favorable to me as the teacher. This lets the student know that they are still in control, but that they need to choose one of the choices that I have given him/her (Funk, 2011).

As a teacher, I will not be able to make a student change his/her behavior. I can only motivate them to do so (Funk, 2011). I will teach my students to use a replacement behavior for their aggression. My students will know that it is okay to be angry, but that it is not okay to act on it in such a way. I will talk with these students about how to think about their feelings and how to come up with possible resolutions to them. My students will be taught how to recognize when they are beginning to feel angry and learn to either talk themselves through it or do what they need to do to prevent the poor behavior. Whether it is removing themselves from a situation, stepping out in the hall, going to a resource room, or sitting in a relaxation corner, I want my students to learn how to manage and take full responsibility for their behavior. I will also use positive reinforcement when these students are demonstrating good behavior throughout the day.

Once the severe behavior has been extinguished, it is very important to figure out what caused it. I will look into the problem in its entirety and make sure it wasn’t something I did or didn’t do for the student. The behavior is not going to be put to an end unless I look for and address the source of it. Simply identifying the behavior of the student acting out is not enough. I recognize that when a student acts out, it is due to a deeper problem inside of him/her that needs to be addressed. In this case, calling home and communicating with the student’s caregiver may be very beneficial. The parents/guardians of a student know their child more than anyone else. They may have some advice or answers as to why the student behaves the way he/she does in school and how to best prevent it from happening again in the future.

Other less serious behaviors, such as hyperactivity and inattentiveness, will also occur in the classroom. These may be solved with the simple effort of planning ahead. For instance, if a student has ADHD or is off-task many times a day, I will be aware of this and be proactive in my decision-making. I will place this student closer to my desk and with students who are less likely to get off-task. I will also group this student with other students who are willing to help him/her get his/her job done effectively rather than take part in the misbehaviors.

As far as discipline goes, I plan on using as little of punishment as possible. I understand that some behaviors will need punishment, but for most cases I would like to use natural consequences. I do not think that students learn as well through punishment that does not relate to their problem behavior (detention, staying in from recess, etc.). If the teacher keeps students in from recess to think about what they did wrong or to talk about their behavior, this is an effective use of discipline and consequences. I want my students to understand why they are receiving the discipline that they are, which is best understood if it relates to their misbehavior. Alongside this form of negative reinforcement, I believe that positive reinforcement is an effective strategy to use in the classroom as well. If my students are going to be disciplined for their negative behavior, they will more-so be praised for their positive behavior.

On the note of reinforcement, I am a firm believer of behaviorism in the classroom. I do not agree with the terms of extreme behaviorism, but I think behaviorism is a great tool to use in the classroom. Students at the elementary level have young minds and are learning which behaviors are acceptable in their everyday lives. Some of these learned behaviors of students are as simple as raising their hands before they talk, but they may have a huge impact on the level of management in a classroom. Using a behavior contract is another way to teach an individual student how he/she should be acting in the classroom. This can be used with positive and negative reinforcement as well as tangible recognition, but may only work with certain students and specific behaviors.

Harry Wong stated it best, “If you do not have a plan, you are simply planning to fail” (Wong, 2001). I have a loosely-structured plan I intend on using in order to keep my students and my classroom well-managed in the future. We, as teachers, need to remember that we must be prepared for every situation, not only the problems that we know will arise.

References

Funk, D. (2011). *Teaching with love & logic: Taking control of the classroom.* Love and Logic Press.

Marzano, R., & Pickering, D. (2011). *The highly engaged classroom*. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research.

Rebora, A. (2013, October 14). Instructional Coaches Dissect Classroom-Management Challenges. Retrieved September 5, 2014.

Wong, H., & Wong, R. (2001). *The first days of school: How to be an effective teacher* (Second ed.). Mountain View, CA: Harry K. Wong Publications