Classroom Management Philosophy

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Abstract

My plan for managing my classroom involves preventative measures for misbehavior. I hope to establish a safe environment for students and create lessons that are engaging and keep them actively involved. When misbehavior does occur, it should be handled efficiently in the way that I establish at the beginning of the class. My personal method most resembles Assertive Discipline.
Classroom Management Philosophy

The skill of effective classroom management is essential to teaching. In order to teach effectively, there must be cooperation on my part as a teacher and on the students’ part—both with myself and each other. In order for day-to-day tasks to be completed successfully, there needs to be an overall sense of positivity in the classroom. In order for this to occur, the students need to understand my expectations from the beginning, and be respectful to all from day one. In order to be able to teach content effectively, misbehavior should be avoided at all costs. Preventing misbehavior is my number one priority in this sense because it will keep all classes flowing smoothly and enable me to teach the students what they need to know. When misbehavior does occur, the situation needs to be handled as quickly as possible, while coming up with a solution that can model more appropriate behavior and emphasize responsibility and maturity.

My attitude toward classroom management stems from my own experiences and disposition. I firmly believe that the classroom should be a safe and positive place for all students. I have learned through my experience as a student that learning is best facilitated when the teacher is confident and encouraging. The class with the teacher who is giving his/her best effort on their part generally have students who do the same. The students in a classroom generally mirror the attitude of the teacher, so I understand that my mindset will likely be reflected by them. Overall, I have a cheerful and optimistic disposition, and I believe that everyone can succeed in the classroom with enough help and encouragement. I am biased in a sense because I was labeled gifted and talented in elementary, which followed me through high school. I do not have a personal understanding of struggling students, but I am experienced in tutoring, and can usually formulate different ways of interpreting material in order to help
students grasp difficult subjects. I can sympathize with students because I know how frustrating it can be when the content is challenging, but I think if I can encourage all students to give their best effort, everyone can live up to their own personal standards.

From my own experiences, I have concluded that much of the effectiveness of classroom management stems from how the class is taught. As a teacher, I plan to teach lessons that are engaging to all students in the classroom. Much of this involves incorporating multiple intelligences into everyday activities, which I believe enables all students to play on the best of their strengths. Jacob Kounin, an educational psychologist, emphasized that effective classrooms were one’s where the lessons were engaging and kept students actively involved. Kounin stressed that if the teacher is keeping all students immersed in the content in new and interesting ways, then the students will have more accountability and gain a better understanding. Another aspect of Kounin’s theory that I will implement is withitness (Charles 2011), which I think ties into this. With more active and dynamic lessons, it will be essential for me to be aware of what is going on with every student at all times. This will help to prevent misbehavior, which is one of the goals of being an effective teacher. During more engaging lessons, having withitness not only helps to prevent misbehavior, it also will help me be more aware of what my students are learning and be more able to monitor their progress and interact with them.

I believe that misbehavior often occurs because a student feels that their needs are not being met. More specifically, they do not grasp concepts of the content that many of the other students do. This extends to Rudolf Dreikurs’ theory regarding classroom discipline. He says that all students have a need for belonging that effects their behavior in class. When a student feels that they are not a part of the majority, they may act out and disrupt the class as a way of saying, “Hey, look at me!” In drawing attention to themselves, these students are trying to gain their way
back into the group, or inadvertently seeking help when they cannot communicate this any other way. Dreikur’s highlights “mistaken goals,” which are the objectives of students who are feeling left out. He includes “attention seeking, power seeking, revenge seeking, and displaying inadequacy (Charles 2011).” If I notice such behavior, Dreikurs recommends discussing the behavior with the student and finding out what the student needs in order to stop this need to act out. This strategy works well with my personality because it enables me to stay positive and seek a solution with the student, instead of simply punishing him/her and moving on. This, I think, would also prevent misbehavior in the future.

Perhaps the most important way to manage class behavior is to set forth expectations at the beginning of class, even during the first meeting. I strongly believe that establishing expectations as early as possible can go a long way toward preventing misbehavior. Ronald Morrish’s theory about Real Discipline explains how educators should teach students how to behave in their classroom, and once this is accomplished the students will feel a personal responsibility because they truly know how to behave (Charles 2011). Morrish stresses that once a teacher ‘trains’ the students the most important thing is to enforce the rules established. In my classroom, I plan to establish the rules, the main ones being responsibility and respect, teach them what these mean and how they relate to my class, and enforce consequences every time a student fails to meet these adequately. Other theorists that reiterate teaching of expectations are Harry and Rosemary Wong, who believe that what a teacher does on the first day of class determines the entire school year. They claim more specifically that rules should be taught during the first two weeks of school, and when this occurs the rest of the year will go smoothly. I do not think I will spend two weeks of my classes teaching students how to behave, but I
definitely believe that the rules and how I expect them to be followed should be reiterated throughout the school year, not only on the first day.

As far as strategies for managing misbehavior, I envision myself following the pattern of Assertive Discipline, proposed by Lee and Marlene Cantor. Many of the other theories almost seem too soft as far as dealing with misbehavior when it occurs. Sometimes it is possible to simply come to a solution by asking the students questions about their feelings, but from my own experience I know that negative consequences are often necessary. Assertive discipline places the responsibility for behavior on the student, and emphasizes that the teacher communicate this with the student. In my classroom, I will follow the Cantors’ idea of a hierarchy of consequences, ranging in severity as misbehavior ranges in severity (Charles 2011). I will use the question/answer strategy for mild misbehavior, but I feel that there should be more severe punishment for those students with extremely disruptive behavior. Either way I know that I must be firm in my attitude about misbehavior, because it is serious as it disrupts the learning environment for everyone. I think with assertive discipline I will be able to effectively manage misbehavior while maintaining a positive and encouraging atmosphere at the same time.

I envision my classroom as a safe place where students are engaged and happy. However, I realize that misbehavior will occur despite my efforts. I think that it will be minimal, however, if I understand the students and their needs, and teach them expected behavior. My philosophy involves establishing relationships with students through engaging lessons that get them interested in my content. I think encouragement and trust are essential to having a smooth flow throughout a school year. My plan for classroom management stems from many theories, but my own personality reflects this combination of ideas. Hopefully, through my efforts, misbehavior
can be prevented most of the time, but when it is necessary, I will enforce my class rules in order to keep the class in a safe environment.
References