Philosophy of Classroom Management

Austin Davis

Prof. Martynowicz

December 9th, 2010
Philosophy of Classroom Management

As professional in the field of education, it is essential to have a clear management plan for your classroom. This should include rules, procedures and a clear line of punishments for unacceptable behavior within the classroom. Every teacher has a different plan of action for how they will handle their classrooms but all good plans have some key traits in common. The plan can be utilized fully within the overlying rules of the school that the teacher teaches in, it relates to the teachers personality and most importantly, it maximizes the overall effectiveness of teacher’s ability to teach their students.

My discipline plan was developed to relate to my personality and how I like classrooms to be run. I have a laid back personality so I prefer my students to be able to have fun with learning and enjoy being in my classroom. I do not like disrespectful behavior or apathy within my classroom. I believe that disrespectful behavior in the classroom is a result of students that challenge the authority of the teacher. In order to prevent this, the teacher must set clear examples of their authority and be consistent in all of their discipline procedures. Apathy within the classroom is a result of not fully engaging the student, this is the job of the teacher. We have a responsibility to ensure that our students are learning and they learn best when they are engaged. I also believe that engaging students will eliminate a large percentage of classroom interruptions because the students will not engage in activities that would interrupt the class.

I also have a friendly disposition that causes me to want to connect with the people I am around on a personal level. I think that this ability to connect with people will help me to establish a classroom that is both welcoming and effective. I know that students have a tendency to try to walk over the “nice” teachers and so I will have to make my authority clear early. I believe that it is easier to start off hard on students and then ease off on strictness as they earn it. It is far easier to ease off later than it is to step down on students after they are used to a rule free
Philosophy of Classroom Management

environment. This can lead to full on student revolt. I will inform my classes up front that my nature is to be warm and laid back but I will not act on that until they have earned the right for this treatment. That way when I am hard on them early they will not resent me for it in the end even if they don’t like me at the moment, they will respect that I did not lie to them up front.

I have learned that throughout my life I have not been a particularly organized person. Because of this character flaw, I will be instituting procedures to ensure that my students help with my own organization. I will have trays labeled for all of my classes that they will turn homework into as well as other boxes with the dates for them to pick up assignments they missed on their own. My students will be required to turn in their homework assignments from the day before into the tray at the beginning of every class unless I have made a clear note on the board for them to keep it in the case that we will be using the assignment for another activity or going over it in class. This procedure along will help to ensure that I collect all materials that need to be graded and place them in one place so that they do not get mixed up with other class’s work or lost.

I am a firm believer in Glasser’s Noncoercive Discipline. According to Glasser, it is impossible to maintain complete control of the classroom solely through your authority as the teacher. (Glasser 2010) It is imperative to create lessons that are engaging and relevant to the students life. Glasser calls this ability to maintain classroom discipline through engaging lessons Quality Education. Glasser encourages the development of a warm supportive classroom (Charles, 2011) in which you are open, supportive and upfront with them. I think that this will be easy for me based on my personality because I want a warm classroom environment.

I do not completely agree with Glasser’s method for dealing with rule violations. Glasser encourages the idea of immediate restitution of an offense to the hurt party but not a real
Philosophy of Classroom Management

punishment for the offender. Glasser says that the teacher needs to address the situation with a neutral tone and a conversational voice which I agree with, but the goal of the teacher should be to talk out the actions of the student and direct them on how to fix it. I do not believe with the second part of this theory. I believe that an equal punishment for the student’s action needs to follow but has to already be established within the rules and procedures that the students have already been given.

I find that I prefer the Marvin Marshall approach to student misbehavior. His management is based around the Hierarchy of Social Development. (Charles, 2011) There are four levels of the Hierarchy. Level A is Anarchy which is the lowest and the student will not produce anything positive within that class time if the level stays the same. Level B is Bossing/bullying/bothering which is the most common level of misbehavior. At this level a student is causing some level of harm to another student without considering that they are doing so. Students at this level will only obey if made to do so. Levels A & B are unacceptable classroom behavior. Level C is cooperation/conformity. At this level, students are conforming to expectations but for reasons such as procedures, peer pressure or teacher demands. The final level is D which is Democracy. At this level, students are performing productively of their own accord and for the better of the classroom as a whole. Level D is what all teachers and students should aim for.

In the event that a student is acting up, the initial response should be to use some kind of unobtrusive tactic such as stopping the lesson and staring at the student, eye contact or my personal favorite proximity. By moving into the student’s immediate area, you are not threatening them but you are forcing them to acknowledge that you are aware of their behavior. The second stage of Marshall’s intervention strategy is to ask the student what level their
Philosophy of Classroom Management

behavior falls in. This means that as the teacher, you have established the levels of Social Hierarchy with them and they are fully aware of the levels. Asking the student to grade the level of their inappropriate behavior separates them from the actual action but forces them to look at the behavior without feeling challenged. The third step is to provide the student with a guided choice assignment. When the rest of class is focused on something, approach the student and give them a guided writing exercise that makes the student reflect on their behavior. First, ask the student why they are in trouble and secondly if they feel like they are being singled out. After the questions, have them write a response to questions that are aimed at acknowledgement, choice and commitment. Generally this will stop the behavior but in the event that it does not move on to step 4 which is a self-diagnostic referral. These referrals are aimed at their misbehavior on a deeper level. These forms should be kept by the teacher as talking points with administrators or parents. Marshall suggests using these self-diagnostic referrals two more times but I disagree. After the first one is unsuccessful, I would send the student to administration. I would have documentation of the student’s misbehavior and acknowledgement of it so I do not feel more chances are necessary.

I think that in order to prevent misbehavior as much as possible, it is essential to keep students engaged. Glasser has ideas on how to accomplish this along with Fred Jones. Jones emphasizes that to prevent misbehavior, teachers need to apply a few strategies. (Charles, 2011) First, teachers must avoid wasting time. The down time that a teacher gives up to their students is time that they are not learning and time they are occupying themselves with off task behaviors. Jones also emphasizes the prevention of student passivity which occurs when students are not engaged. Glasser mentions how students need to be involved and Jones includes it in his management plan as well because student involvement will prevent most interruptions. Jones
Philosophy of Classroom Management

also teaches people to avoid ineffective nagging. Students become annoyed when they are told the same thing over and over again. Instead of nagging to students to get the behavior that you want as a teacher, Jones suggests the use of strong body language and tone of voice. Showing the student’s that you mean business and who is in charge can stop most confrontations before they happen.

The final idea that I got out of Jones’ work is the interior loop for seating arrangements. Arranging the student’s desks in a way that will allow you to be in close proximity to all students with minimal movement can be very effective at maintaining order. When students know that you can in their space immediately when they misbehave, they think of their actions more before they do them. I will organize my desks within my own classroom using this strategy of an “Interior Loop” to help with my presence within the classroom.

The last theorist that I take parts of my classroom management philosophy from is Craig Seganti. Seganti suggests assigned seats from the first day of class which is a strategy that I will use. I will place my students in assigned seats for the first few weeks of the term in alphabetical order so that I can learn their names more effectively. He also suggests learning names as quickly as possible in order to establish a connection. He suggests saying their name five times in your head when you call it while looking at them so you can connect a name to a face. I will use this tactic and if it is acceptable within my school, I will take a picture of each student with their names behind them so that I can study them at home and hopefully learn them within the first few days considering that I am generally very poor at remembering names.

I believe that establishing a classroom with clear procedures and consequences for inappropriate actions are the key to maintaining an effective learning environment. The use of engaging lessons and stopping problem behaviors before they can escalate will prevent almost all
Philosophy of Classroom Management

severe rule violations. I will establish respectful connections with all of my students and make sure that they know that I am their teacher first so they will be expected to learn and respect me but second I want them to enjoy my class. I think that all students are entitled to a quality education and in order to make that a reality; I have to ensure that the class is attentive and the classroom environment is safe. I want to have fun in my classroom. That is my personality and I want it to shine through but the students must understand that in order to have fun, they must abide by the rules of my class and when the environment is conducive to learning, I will make it a fun environment as well.