Katie Dow   <u>Classroom Management Reflection Paper</u>   Feb. 23, 2012

<u>Personal Teaching Philosophy:</u> Since September, my personal teaching philosophy has most certainly changed. I still want to be a teacher who is effective and just with my students, but I also want to be well respected and confident. Through my first internship I realized that I still have many things to learn about teaching. I need to build up my confidence and be sure about myself. I also need to expand my pedagogical knowledge and resources. Most importantly, I need to continually work on developing and perfecting the art of classroom management.

> "It is an integral part of education and teaching that truly makes all the difference. There is no intent here to claim that classroom management and discipline are not important. Yet I need to underline that classroom management is not teaching. Classroom management is a necessary condition for teaching. Therefore claiming that because there is no noise from a classroom, that students sit in rigid rows, and raise their hands before speaking means that effective teaching is happening is not well founded. Teaching and learning are much too complicated for that." (http://morgan.ucs.mun.ca/~asingh/new_site/files/classroom_mgmt.pdf)

In this regard, my specific goals are to ensure that each student has his or her own personal and individual success, this means; providing a safe and comfortable environment, building a relationship with students, teaching the *students* not the *curriculum*, and ensuring that I provide opportunities for all different types of learners to

demonstrate their knowledge and creativity. I want to be a fair and consistent teacher who my students will remember for years to come.

Classroom Structure, Daily Routine & Schedule: Physical classroom structure is an integral part of delivering effective classroom management to your students. Jacquelin Patrick and Suzy John have developed an excellent resource for teachers who are creating an appropriate physical classroom environment for their students. They provide a checklist that indicates whether your room environment is below standard, basic, or proficient. Proficiency is indicated by these key findings; "physical environment is clean and orderly, arrangement supports flexible movement, materials/technology/resources are proactively managed" (5). As their discussion continues they further illustrate the specifics of these indicators giving specific examples of what does and does not constitute a well-organized and structured classroom. From my internship I learned just how much the physical environment affects students. Even in grade two it is very important for students to learn how to be organized and responsible (especially in a team-teaching environment with 40 students). Our classroom layout was very fluid but also consistent at the same time. It worked very well for the students in the class but may not have been exactly how I would have done things (given the classroom was completely my responsibility).

Very frequently, probably at least once or more a week, we would sporadically change the desk arrangement (1 of our 2 classroom had desks and the other had a few working tables and a sitting mat). Sometimes it was simply moving the desk of one student and other times it consisted of a total overall of the room. This was a very useful and smart thing to do, especially when we noticed students were starting to get fed up

with one another at their table group, or were just incompatible with a certain student. We also often changed the displays in the room, such as the student work posted, seasonal directions, or instructional groupings. This was necessary and if done consistently (and things were put away afterwards) saves major time when things get busier (as they always do).

Even though change is good in the classroom, I think it also important to keep some things consistent. In my classroom I think it would be absolutely imperative to have all materials clearly labeled and suitably organized. In my internship classroom students knew where things could be found and where they should go when finished with them. This is really important when it comes to instilling independence in your students and making the most of the few instructional hours you have in the day. In order for this organization system to work, the classroom itself must be orderly and tidy. If there is garbage and food everywhere, the floors are constantly covered in junk, and the cupboards and storage areas are cluttered then disaster and chaos are bound to happen. Students will feel disorganized and confused (as will the teacher, at least I certainly would!). This type of environment is inconsistent with learning and personal development and something that would absolutely not happen in my classroom.

Another point I should make, that I didn't even consider before internship, is the transitional times for students. In my team-teaching grade two classroom this was an interesting issue. Students would often receive instructions and lessons in one classroom (in front of the smart board) and then relocate to the other room (via the hallway) where they would begin and work on their task. I found this especially troublesome because students would frequently get off task in the 20 seconds between both classrooms. If I

were to team-teach I would absolutely insist that I use a large classroom or one that had its own connection. Reflectively, this was one of the 'unchangeable' things that troubled me during my internship.

Positive Relationships: During a student's pivotal time in the elementary classroom, they forge a variety of relationships; with peers, friends, enemies, administrators, and their teachers. Our place as teachers and mentors can make a huge difference in the lives of our students. Building rapport and developing an appropriate relationship is something that I worked on from the very beginning of my internship. Through my research I found a great explanation for the teacher-student relationship in elementary education;

> "Positive student-teacher relationships are characterized by open communication, as well as emotional and academic support that exist between students and teachers. Student-teacher relationships become particularly important during early adolescence, as students move from the supportive environment of elementary school to the more disjointed atmosphere of a middle school or junior high (www.cedu.niu.edu).

I found that some of the best techniques for developing good relationships with my students were to find a commonality between the student and myself, and to spend some one-on-one time getting to know them. When students know you and get to interact on a personal level they tend to trust you and therefore 'buy into' your teaching that much more. For me, taking the time to make that connection truly makes all the difference.

As previously mentioned, peer relationships are also extremely important. "Peer relationships and friendships become more important as children grow into early adolescents. Research indicates that older youth interact with peers more frequently

and longer than do younger youth, both within school and out of school (Larson &
Richards, 1991). Developing high quality peer relationships and friendships are
important because young people who have difficulties in developing or maintaining
friendships are more likely to—

- Engage in aggressive behavior (Newcomb, Bukowski, & Pattee, 1993).
- Report low academic achievement and high unemployment later in life
  (Woodward & Fergusson, 1999).
- Exhibit higher degrees of loneliness and depression (Parker, Rubin, Price, &
  de Rosier, 1995).

Youth friendships —

- Are associated with self-esteem and contribute to forming self-image (Azmitia,
  2002)
- Are related to social competence (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995) and enhanced
  leadership skills (Berndt, Hawkins, & Jiao, 1999).
- Can buffer youth from the negative impact of family troubles (Gauze,
  Bukowski, Aquan-Assee, & Sippola, 1996; Bolger, Patterson, & Kupersmidt,
  1998).
- Lesson the likelihood of experiencing peer victimization (Hodges, Boivin,
  Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999).
- Influence academic achievement (Fleming, Cook, & Stone, 2002; Wentzel,
  Barry, & Caldwell, 2004).
- *http://cals-cf.calsnet.arizona.edu/fcs/bpy/content.cfm?content=peer_rel

With this research and information, it is very clear that the beginning relationships and relational skills that students develop in elementary school are important to their continual development. Therefore we, as teachers need to ensure that our classroom environment and teaching allows for and reinforces good peer relationships.

Classroom expectations, rules, and guidelines: Students in my class will be very aware of the classroom rules, expectations and routines. Respect for self, others (including classmates and teachers), and things will be of the utmost importance. I truly think that respect and trust are deciding factors in the success of a classroom. As teachers we have to model and promote these characteristics every day. "By definition, a community is a group of people who work with one another building a sense of trust, care, and support. This means that in our classrooms, part of our job is to provide opportunities and structures by which students can help and support one another. It also means that we provide explicit instruction and support so that students learn how to do this (Hittie, 1)." Therefore as teachers we must remember that we are leaders and role models to our students. If we want them to act in a certain way, me must also act in that way. In the beginning of the school year I think it is very important to work on instilling and practicing the rules, regulations and expectations of the school and classroom. With common routine students will begin to anticipate and expect what will take place from day to day. With this in place it will also be very clear to the students what will occur if one of these rules or procedures are broken. Therefore students will better understand the consequences of their actions. When everyone (teachers, admin, parents, and students) is on the same page, things will run much smoother for all parties.

Social Skill Development: Similar to instilling positive relationships between students, it is also extremely important to consider the social skills that your students will develop. Dr. Richard Lavioe says this well;

> **"T**he effective educator must be ever mindful of the simple fact that children go to school for a living. School is their job, their livelihood, their identity. FFTherefore, the critical role that school plays in the child's social development and self-concept must be recognized. Even if a child is enjoying academic success in the classroom, his attitude about school will be determined by the degree of social success that he experiences." (http://www.ricklavoie.com/teacherart.html)

As teachers we often forget that school may very well be the best part of our students lives, or it may be the worse. Some of our students may be social butterflies, and others might be bullied and rejected by their peers. As a teacher, I will try my hardest to teach social skills such as empathy, caring, respect, acceptance, forgiveness, and kindness. These skills are tremendously important for the development of good citizens. In the grade two classroom that I was in for my internship, we took time to reflect on how the students were treating others and how they felt as though they were being treated. These were impromptu 'problem solving meetings' with the whole class to discuss issues that might be taking place in the school and on the playground. Our students would come up to solutions to the problems that might be taking place. We would also often read books, which taught and emphasized the important social skills that we wanted our students to learn. The school was also very much on board with the 7 habits model, which was reinforced and often referred to throughout the school. Teachers need to be aware of

the importance of allowing students to do things like group work to learn not just the material, but the important skills that one needs in order to work successfully in a group. Recess and physical education classes are also very important school-linked components of social skill development. They teach cooperation and practical problem-solving skills that are necessary for global citizenship. Ensuring students have this time and these opportunities (albeit, properly supervised and guided by teachers) is very important.

Behaviour Management & Fair and Predictable Consequences: Consistency with praise and discipline is a key element of good classroom management. Students need to be aware of, and understand, the consequences of their actions whether good or bad. All rules and consequences must be clearly communicated from the beginning of the year. "Teachers who wish to have a well behaved class need to be consistent in their management every day. Consistency is what holds together any discipline or behavior plan. Without it student behavior will go downhill as they realize the teacher will not enforce the rules (Wagaman, J) http://www.myclassroommanagement.com/effective-management/consistency-in-classroom-management/).

I think that giving students the opportunity to play a role in developing the rules and consequences in their classroom helps them 'buy into' their practice. The rules and consequences should also be understandable and simple (level depends on the grade); therefore they should be clear and comprehensible for *all* members of the class. In my grade two internship we had a consistent consequence for unwanted behaviour, which began with the stoplight system. Once students reached the red light they were required to stay in for 5 minutes at recess, if they misbehaved or acted out again they would stay in for their whole recess. Students also understood what sort of behaviour constituted as a

visit to the office or a call home. Often I found that students knew what was coming

basically directly after they had misbehaved, which to me, indicated that the rules and

consequences were generally fair, predictable, and well understood.

Learning Disabilities, Disorders & Inclusivity: Inclusivity is extremely important for

the development of social skills and learning for every student in the classroom. As

teachers, we need to find ways for all students to be part of the class environment and

community. The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) department of education provides

great insight for inclusion in all schools and what this means.

> The essence of inclusivity is understanding and catering for the different
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> potentials, needs and resources of our students. One important aspect of this is
>
> meeting the needs of all students through effective learning and teaching.
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> Inclusivity in education starts with the recognition of our diversity. It is treating
>
> students as individuals rather than as an homogeneous group. It is about involving
>
> all students in classroom practices by valuing their uniqueness and what they
>
> bring to the classroom. It is about valuing their interests, experiences, abilities,
>
> insights, needs, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, learning styles and intelligences.
>
> Inclusivity embraces the idea that since everyone is an individual, we need to
>
> organise schools, teaching and learning so that each student has a learning
>
> experience that 'fits'.
>
> (http://www.det.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/17920/InclusivityReport.p
>
> df)

Students who are modified in some way, or who have a physical or learning disability should be doing the same activities and work as their peers as much as possible. Students should also be exposed to a variety of disabilities and differences in order to develop empathy and understanding. One morning in my grade 2 classroom, our students were given a presentation on PKS. The student at our school with PKS was in grade 1, was non-verbal, and in a wheel chair. As the presentation was given by her EA's the students in my class became more and more interested and receptive to what the EA's were saying and the student with PKS. At the end of the presentation they were practically jumping out of their seats to go hug the little girl and to 'talk' with her, through her electronic communication system. This experience showed me how meaningful inclusion is, and how simple it can be.

Supports for students-at-risk: As teachers we should make ourselves aware of the personal situations of our students. What occurs outside school for our students might be a totally different world than what we see everyday in the classroom. Elementary school teachers have the power to provide early intervention for students-at-risk and ensure that they succeed in school. This is a position of much responsibility because we might be the ones who change students mind about school and learning. Instilling a love for learning and school is one of our many jobs as educators. We must do everything possible to ensure that our students have success throughout their school years.

At-risk students often need extra educational resources, development of core skills, and encouragement to facilitate academic interest. Barriers, such as SES, the cycle of failure, bias, overworked counselors, stereotypes, and problems at home or with peers may also impede these students. Early identification and

intervention of needs and barriers related to career development may assist in promoting a successful future.

(http://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/news_article/5102/_PARENT/layout_details_cc/false)

It may be stressful, time consuming, and demanding but putting extra time and effort into your students will truly pay off for them and for yourself as a teacher. We must be aware of the resources available to us and keep ourselves up to date with best practices and approaches for helping at risk students in our classroom. Ensuring that all members of your school are on the same page, and having support from administration and resource make it much easier to support your students to their fullest potentials.

Collegial Support & Collaborative Teamwork: Using and developing PLC's, planning together with your grade peers, and collaborating with previous teachers of your students are all excellent ways to make the most of the shared resources that each staff member brings to your school. As new teachers the thought of doing it 'all by yourself' may be overwhelming and stressful, we need to remind ourselves that it is ok to ask others for help and to use our PLC's in this way.

> PLC's are social groupings of new and experienced educators who come together over time for the purpose of gaining new information, reconsidering previous knowledge and beliefs, and building on their own and others' ideas and experiences in order to work on a specific agenda intended to improve practice and enhance students' learning in K–12 schools and other educational settings (http://www.is-

toolkit.com/knowledge_library/kl_files/ProfessionalLearningCommunity_A%20Brief%20Guide.pdf)

We must all be reminded that having a good working relationship with your fellow teachers and administrators is extremely important. Working collaboratively with other teachers may be the difference between a long and successful career and a short and stressful one. Collaborative teamwork was present and well used in the school where I did my first internship. All of the grade two teachers met at least once a week to plan and discuss issues that we might be facing or just to chat. I found this was very useful and successful for all parties. We were able to learn from each other and bounce ideas back and forth about what might and might not work well. Collegial support was also helpful when dealing with behavioural issues. On several occasions my cooperating teacher would go speak to one of her students past teacher when considering how to deal with a specific issue. They would discuss tactics as well as what did and did not work with a particular student. Having this support system really seems to make all the difference. It is very much something that I look forward to when I begin my teaching career.

Resources:

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