Classroom Management Philosophy

Katelyn Baumgartner

University of Mary

A classroom is filled with many opportunities to grow and learn—not only for the students but also for the teachers. However, these valuable learning opportunities can only occur in a classroom that is well-managed. Classroom management is so much more than the reactive discipline and constant battle for control. Classroom management is when the students and teacher can work together to create a safe and effective learning environment through appropriate classroom design, (in regards to layout and instruction) communication, and use of procedures.

 Since the classroom is where many students will spend the majority of their waking hours during the school year, I feel it is important that the classroom serves as a home away from home for the students. This can be accomplished by providing a predictable routine and establishing rapport with students. I plan to put to use techniques from Fay & Funk’s *Teaching with Love & Logic: Taking control of the classroom* to work in my own classroom. Of course as a teacher I do want to establish the role of authoritarian but I want to do so in a way where the students feel comfortable asking questions, (about curriculum or procedures or anything else they do not understand) having discussions, and knowing they have somebody to confide in. I want my classroom to have a democratic atmosphere where student feel free to speak their minds and know they will be heard. I am not averse to compromise but will let the students know that compromise does not always mean doing things the way they want them done. I think by creating an environment where students can let their voices be heard that this will encourage them to engage in classroom activities and make class time a meaningful and fun experience. After all, Marzano and Pickering (2003) say, “When students feel enthusiastic or zestful, they are more disposed to engage in new behaviors and tasks” (p. 4) once again supporting the ideas that the relationships between students and teachers and the attitudes of the teachers are crucial.

 Not only do I want to be able to freely communicate with my students but I also want parents to know that my door is always open and the answers to their questions are only a phone call or email away. Many times the only instances of parent-teacher communication are the very beginning of the year, conferences, or for instances of serious misbehavior. When I think about myself ever having children I would like to be able to get to know and communicate frequently with the person with whom my children would be spending the majority of their time. This is why I would like to take the time to send out monthly newsletters to parents to communicate to them what we will be covering in class that month. Also, in doing so I believe the students will be better served. If the only time they practice the skills learned in class is between the hours of 8 and 3 Monday through Friday, they will likely forget a great deal of that information over the weekend. I think by establishing relationships with parents that together we could be an excellent support system for the students and help them to master the curriculum and skills they will learn in the classroom.

 In addition to creating open lines of communication to make students feel secure I would also emphasize the use of procedures. Many students lack predictability in their everyday lives and so creating a classroom where they feel like they know what to expect will give them the sense of control and stability they need in order to focus and learn effectively. In Harry Wong’s book *The Classroom Management Book* (2014), he states that, “The effective teacher is a model of consistency” ( p.11). I hope to embody this statement fully for the sake of all the students in my class. I believe the use of procedures for routine tasks would definitely help me to become a more effective teacher. There are only so many days of school and a we have great deal of material we need to teach in that time; there simply is not enough time in the year to allow any of it to be squandered. Furthermore, the predictability that comes with schedules and procedures of course benefits the teacher as well in that less class time would be wasted always having to reiterate directions and clear up misunderstanding.

While we all hope that class will run smoothly all day every day we know better. One of the incredible things about children is the way they will never cease to surprise and amaze us. In order to be a proactive teacher rather than a reactive teacher I would like to emphasize good behavior rather than dwell on bad behavior. In an attempt to accomplish this, I can see myself using Jacob Kounin’s strategy of the Ripple Effect with my students to let their classmates serve as their models of good behavior rather than always giving students lectures that they will train themselves to tune out (Wong, Wong, Jondahl, Ferguson, 2014). However, when they do misbehave I believe that there do need to be consequences. That is not to say that there should be a “one-size-fits-all” type of punishment but I think that there needs to be action taken when misbehavior occurs so that students understand that the behavior will not be tolerated and that they can learn from the experience. I think one of the best ways of doing this would be by involving the class in a discussion at the beginning of the year about appropriate and inappropriate behavior. I would outline my philosophy on discipline but would not try to make a concrete list of rules and resulting consequences if the rules are broken. I think doing so would only give students the opportunity to weigh their options and decide if the consequence is bad enough to refrain from the behavior. Even David Funk, co-author of *Teaching with Love & Logic: Taking control of the classroom* (1995), says, “Advance warning of consequences has never had a positive effect on school discipline” (p. 12). My philosophy on discipline is as follows. When minor misbehavior such as incessant talking, pestering a neighbor, or budging in line occurs those are easy fixes. In those instances, I would conduct a 30 second intervention where I would take the student aside, ask him why he thinks he is being pulled aside, explain that the behavior was wrong, and ask him not to do it again and to right his wrong. For more serious offenses or habitual offenders, I would impose a Three Strike System. I would start with the interventions. If these prove inadequate, I would want to sit down with the student individually during recess or after school. If the misbehavior continued to occur, I would need to involve parents or perhaps administration. I see the final option as a last resort when all other methods of dealing with the behavior have proved unsuccessful. Of course all situations are unique and discipline should be flexible as to cater to the situation.

I want my classroom to be a place where students want to come to every day and never leave feeling like they do not have a voice or that what they have to say is unimportant. I think that by implementing strategies learned from *Teaching with Love & Logic*, procedure methods from Harry Wong, and research-based strategies from Marzano, that this goal can be accomplished. A classroom is more than just a place to drop children off for 7 hours a day; a classroom should be a place to foster growth of mind and soul. Without the use of classroom management techniques, a classroom could easily become chaotic and make education a chore instead of a privilege.

References

Fay, J. & Funk, D. (1995).  Teaching with Love & Logic: Taking control of the classroom.  Love & Logic Press Inc: Golden, CO.

Marzano, R. J. & Pickering, D. J. (2003). Classroom Management that Works: Research –based strategies for every teacher. ASCD Press: Alexandria,

Wong, H., Wong, R., Jondahl, S., & Ferguson, O. (2014). *The Classroom management book*. Harry K. Wong Publication: Mountain View, CA.