Building a Classroom

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Every teacher has his or her own classroom management philosophy. Throughout the course of one’s lifetime, this philosophy may change shape and style, for good or for bad. Luckily, we humans can acknowledge that mistakes are bound to happen and it is how we learn from them that matters most. So far in my preservice education career, I have learned of a variety of classroom management styles and techniques. I have not only learned these from lectures but have also been given the opportunity to learn by hands-on, in-class observations. After all is said and done for my first semester of Block One Practicum, I would have to say that the two main classroom management theories that stand out to me as most effective are Love & Logic (by Jim Fay and David Funk) and the Well-Managed Classroom (by Dr. Harry Wong). My philosophy is centered first and foremost on the student. Essentially, the Love & Logic (LL) theory emphasizes the push for growth and new dimensions in the classroom (Fay & Funk 1995), both for the student and the teacher. The management theory advised by Dr. Wong supports the growth and development of the effective teacher through exemplary classroom management skills. My hope is to combine these two theories into something even more extravagant that can help me shape my classroom into the best environment for my future students.

The two parts of my classroom management philosophy are approach and reaction. Essentially, LL makes up the majority of the approach aspect while WMC contributes to the reaction aspect. That being said, I will describe the way that both of these theories are intertwined in the creation of my philosophy, starting with even before the first days of school. There has to be a strong connection between love for the students I have yet to meet and passion for their success as well as my own.

In the fashion of the LL theory, it will be necessary for the students to know that I care about them and that they are walking into a room that is safe. The students that will walk in my room on that first day of school will come in as broken and fragile human beings. Some of them may have never experienced the love of a caring adult. Some of them may have never experienced true learning. Some of them may have never known what it is like to succeed. It will be my job to show them that the classroom is a place where they are free to learn and free to love, to be loved. I wish the deep care I have for my future students would be enough to run my classroom all 180 days of the school year. But because humans are prone to add an unexpected quality to life, I will also need to have guidelines and expectations for my students, my classroom, and myself. I will avoid using the term *rules* as I feel that it has a negative connotation. Besides, Webster’s (Pocket) Dictionary defines the term as “a set guide for conduct,” and thus I find guidelines to be more appropriate.

The guidelines that I use for my classroom will depend on the continuous experience I gain throughout my preservice career as well as the school that I end up teaching in. For example, at Northridge Elementary, the school day is started with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by: “Northridge superstars learn by shining with respect, responsibility, and safety.”   
If I were to teach at Northridge, I would love to incorporate these values into my classroom guidelines. It is important to keep in mind what Dr. Harry Wong considers the three characteristics of an effective teacher. These are: 1) Has positive expectations for student success; 2) Is an extremely good classroom manager; 3) Knows how to design lessons for student mastery (Wong, 10).

This leads well into how I will react to classroom disruptions and discipline issues. I think that the LL theory of responding is very effective. It incorporates Choice Theory, which advocates the student’s perception of control over the situation. Essentially, the student has chosen to “act out” or go against the guidelines. He or she is ultimately responsible for fixing the issue. One challenge that I see for myself is being able to control my temper. My future students will be young and underdeveloped. They will not be able to control their emotions like I will. Also, they will need help in looking outside the box. I hope that I can give each individual student the assistance that he or she needs in finding the calmest way to fix the problem at hand.

In conclusion, I find it hard to create one phrase that sums up my classroom management philosophy. It sounds “too good to be true” when I type that I will have all of my ducks in a row by that first day of school. Personally, all I know is that I want to be a teacher that can provide stability in the life of a child who may be lacking it in his or her life. There will have to be a daily routine in my class if I want the students to be responsible for their own learning. I learned that from Dr. Harry Wong. I also know that if I want my students to put their best foot forward, I have to have a relationship with them. This I learned from the Love & Logic theory. In the end, Love & Logic gives me the foundation that pushes my desire for the Well-Managed Classroom that Dr. Wong encourages.

References

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