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**Classroom Management Final Project**

Every teacher’s goal is to create a classroom where students can be highly engaged while being on their best behavior. However, it is a daily struggle to find and maintain a successful classroom environment as there are so many variables interacting with each other in a fast paced ever changing way. These variables include:

1. Classroom arrangement
2. Teacher enthusiasm, interest, and pedagogical content knowledge
3. Student’s mental state in the classroom
4. Rules, regulations and how the teacher enforces them
5. Student teacher relationship

These categories all play a great role in the success of a classroom. Teachers will always have to keep an eye on all of them equally at the same time in order to give their students the best chance at a highly engaged classroom (Dahlgren).

1. **Classroom Arrangement**

It is a well-known fact among teachers that if the classroom environment is positive, then students will more than likely perform well in the classroom. The design, layout, seating arrangement, décor, and even the lighting can go a long way to setting the overall “feel” of the classroom. When the phrase “positive learning environment” is mentioned, even the physical part of the classroom is very important (Dahlgren). For example, if students walk into a classroom that looks dingy and has no décor provided by the teacher, chances are that it will instill negative feelings in the student; if the teacher doesn’t care enough to decorate his room, what does he care about me? Further, this kind of atmosphere will probably relay a sense that the teacher does not care about the classroom and does not even want to be there. Decorating can be as simple as covering the walls with colored paper to brighten up the room and give it color and feel. There are even studies of colors setting moods for people who are surrounded by them.

Another important classroom element that often gets overlooked is the seating arrangement in the classroom. When it comes to seating arrangement, there are a few things that must be considered when you are setting a classroom up. First, the teacher must always hold the power position. Teachers are the leaders of the classroom and every person in the classroom should know that (Dahlgren).This means that when a teacher is setting up their classroom, they must be able to see everything and be seen from every edge of the classroom. When a student looks up from their work, the teacher, whether they are standing up or at their desk, must be able to be seen by the student instantly. This means that specific student field of view is important. Just like in the power position for teachers, student’s field of view must not be blocked to the teacher. This means that desks cannot be sitting right in front of each other or too close otherwise students might not be able to see important information very easily. While this may be a challenge in crowded classrooms, a teacher must do everything in their power so that students have as clear a view as possible in order to keep them engaged. Second, teachers must consider distractions from outside of the classroom. Since this is something that the teacher cannot control, the best thing they can do is put the door at the back of the classroom so it cannot be seen without having to turn all the way around. Finally, one positive strategy that a teacher can try is to change it up and move the seating arrangement around from time to time. This means that you can move desks to look different as long as you keep the important points discussed above intact. Sometimes it might be good for students to see from a different point in the classroom so they can try something new. Elementary students love rearrangement, but sometimes you will find resistance from secondary students because they will tend to be territorial. In these instances, the teacher will have to draw on other strategies to keep this effect to a minimum.

Lighting of the classroom is also very important. If a student cannot see what they are doing then they will not do it very well. There must always be adequate lighting in a classroom so that students can see and learn. Nevertheless there are some scenarios, just like with all the previous topics talked about, where teachers have to deal with things out of their control like school budgets and supplies. Sometimes there are schools that cannot afford to have the air conditioner on all day during the summer, or might not have all the school supplies like pencils, paper and other things needed for students. Unfortunately, this can also be true with classroom lighting. In older schools, lighting will probably be old and not of the intensity to properly light a room where students are working. Veteran teachers know about these things and have their own strategies they use to compensate for shortcoming of this nature. Additionally, a teacher going the extra mile goes a long way in showing students that they really care and will do what it takes for the students to learn.

1. **Teacher’s Interest, Enthusiasm, and Pedagogical Content Knowledge**

A huge tool that teachers can use when they are teaching is enthusiasm for the subject being taught. A positive demeanor on the part of the teacher is the second and most general influence on emotional engagement (Marzano 5). A teacher must be enthusiastic and outgoing when it comes to what they teach so that students in turn will be just as engaged in learning the content. Why would a student want to be excited to learn if they have a teacher who talks unenthusiastically and does not present the information in an engaging way? A teacher must always keep a student on their toes and not let them get mentally bored or else they will lose them during any lesson they teach. One way that a teacher can do this is to provide balanced instruction. When teachers spend too much time on one component of reading, i.e., teaching decoding, the development of another component or reading suffers (Cunningham). What this means is that is a teacher takes too long on one part of their curriculum then other areas will not be covered adequately. “Another thing that has been proved through research is having students read and write extensively during lessons. It has long been known that the amount of time spent reading and writing is directly related to how well children read and write. (Cunningham)” this means that reading and writing have to be done throughout the day across all academic subjects. As students become better readers and writers in all individual content areas, then transferring skills and information across content areas becomes more seamless. Further as these skills become more proficient, transfer of information between student and teachers becomes more seamless as well.

Enthusiasm, however, will only get a teacher so far. If the content you are teaching does not make sense or is presented in bits and pieces that have no logical flow, then it will just be you happily teaching students non useful content which will do them no good. Teachers must be confident and sure of what they are teaching and be able to present it fluently and logically in a way which will transfer information to their students in the most efficient manner possible. Pedagogical content knowledge is a type of knowledge important for effective information transfer that combines formerly separate knowledge bases into a single knowledge base that can help teachers know what teaching approaches best fit the subject being taught (Borich 163).

A teacher being able to combine a high level of enthusiasm with proficient pedagogical strategies will bring together the best of two worlds into a single approach that best facilitates the transfer of useful information to the students in their class.

1. **Student’s Mental State**

The construct of a mental set in classroom management is quite similar to the construct of “mindfulness” in psychology (Marzano 65). Teachers in their classroom must be mindful of the mental state of the classroom and must always make sure that students are happy and learning. As Marzano states in *The Highly Engaged Classroom*, there are three main factors that affect a student’s mindset in the classroom:

* The student’s level of energy
* The demeanor of the teacher
* The student’s perception of acceptance by the teacher and peers

A teacher can keep a student’s level of energy up by making sure they are engaged and comfortable in the classroom. As stated before, if a student is bored by the lesson then they will not be full of energy and they will not learn. Teachers must make sure that they can tap into what a student likes and they will use it as a tool to get them to focus and learn the material presented to them. Granted, when dealing with a room full of students, trying to find that ‘thing’ that will engage all students can be elusive, and therefore is what often defines a good teacher from a great one. When it comes to a student’s perception of acceptance in the classroom, teachers play a big role in making their students feel like they are a part of the classroom environment. Teachers must make sure that the students build great relationships with each other by letting them work together and get to know each other. One thing that a teacher must make sure of is that everyone works with everyone. Students will tend to work with the same people every time groups are called for, so as the teacher, sometimes groups will be switched up so they can work with new people.

Also vital is that everyone be accepted by everyone. Teachers must create a safe environment where students are not afraid to make mistakes as much can be learned from them. In creating this sort of environment, respect has a key role in building the relationships necessary to facilitate a safe environment. Sometimes there will be times where a student will be rude to another or bully them, but that is where strong rules consistently applied become important. Speaking of rules, respect for each other should be the first and most important rule in any teacher’s classroom because it will keep a positive environment for every student. Finally, teachers must pay attention and always be in control and know what is going on in the classroom. It doesn’t take long for things to slip by and lead to things that can ruin the flow or positive vibe of the classroom. ‘Withitness’ is a tool that teachers must have mastered in order to maintain order and control.

1. **Rules and Regulations of The Classroom**

Rules and procedures vary in different classrooms, but we do not find effectively managed classrooms operating without them. It is simply not possible for a teacher to conduct instruction for children to work productively if they have no guidelines for how to behave, when to move about the room, and where to sit, or if they interrupt the teacher frequently and make whatever amount of noise pleases them (Dahlgren). Teachers are the leader of the classroom and hold all the control in it and they should never let that change for any reason. One great example of getting kids to follow rules is by allowing some freedom in creating them. When given this opportunity at the beginning of the year, a teacher can create buy in on the part of the students. This results in a situation where later students won’t be successful in complaining of unfairness though they might try. Further any excuse of ignorance will also fail as they were the one who created them.

Effective teachers teach behavioral rules and classroom routines in much the same way as they teach instructional content, and they review these frequently at the beginning of the school year and periodically thereafter (Dahlgren). Teachers must always make sure students know the rules are there and they must be followed at all times. Students must not be able to do what they want because then the teacher will essentially have no control and nothing will be taught or learned. Teachers must not be afraid to carry out disciplinary actions. Furthermore they carry out disciplinary actions quickly, calmly, and professionally. They do not warn, warn again, and yet warn again. Rather they give children a choice and provide guidance and correction when needed. Teachers must consistently apply rules every time there is an infraction with every student. A teacher never wants to give the impression that the favor one student over another, else rules will fail to have any meaning and a great deal of respect for the teacher will be lost. The major flaw in some classroom management systems is that they have the teacher giving multiple chances, requests, or warnings. Such strategies lead to teacher frustration, and burnout (Dahlgren). Teachers cannot show any sign of weakness or else it will be exploited. They are the leader and manager of the classroom and must not let anyone challenge them or the rules of the classroom. As mentioned before, If they let up on one student then the rest of the students will think they can get away with the same thing. Soon this will lead to testing the water of the other rules and then they will lose all control.

1. **Student – Teacher Relationship**

Student-teacher relationships are the key to ensuring that students feel good about being in class (Marzano 36). Students want to feel like they are wanted in the classroom and it all starts with a teacher’s reactions to students. Teachers must always be positive and encouraging with students. When a student makes a mistake, they cannot ridicule them or dig into them about it because that will just work in a negative direction in opposition to the way the teacher wants to go. Every mistake must be used for learning and enforcing what the right decision should have been. This is how respect is earned for teachers because if a student feels like they can behave badly and it will be ok then the teacher student relationship is compromised and learning will suffer. Further, when this relationship is compromised the safe environment discussed earlier will also suffer and lead to less positive teacher student interaction. In the extreme, some students will lose respect for their teachers because they perceive that the teacher will invest no time in them so they will just give up. Then student will feel like they failed and will shut down, not try any more, and more than likely become disruptive. On the other hand, a positive teacher student relationship will foster a student not simply giving up when something becomes too challenging. Good relationships are the cornerstone to well-run classrooms. If students are aware that the teacher values them as human beings, they will be more likely to work hard for that teacher and less likely to challenge the teacher (Dahlgren).

These five categories break down what leads to a highly effective and manageable classroom. A teacher has the job of balancing all these at the same time without forgetting about any. Respect in the classroom from all parties is a cornerstone of a successful classroom. If a teacher respects their students, more than likely they will get the same respect from their students. If students respect their teacher then they will perform well and behave well. Students who respect their teacher and trust them will try hard without the fear of failure, follow the rules set for them, and respect the peers around them. Respect is the foundation that will lead to a classroom that is in a great position educationally and behaviorally.

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