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| Classroom Management |
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The majority of the information circulating about the topic of class room management acknowledges one guideline of particular importance. Teachers can exert the greatest amount control over the behavior and participation of their students through important preparation that takes place outside of class time. Even though it will always be necessary to handle spontaneous disruptions, a lot of current research shows that the manner in which teachers organize their class time routines and interactions is crucial to preventing distractions in the first place. This essay will examine a few different strategies that teachers can use to gain greater amounts of attention from their students, and in turn, focus that attention in ways that deter disruptive behavior.

Generally speaking, a teacher needs to motivate her students to be interested in the class room agenda before actually carrying it out. In order to garner the quality of attention necessary for learning, the content of the lesson needs to be relevant to the students on many different levels. One aspect of this relevance is cultural. When teaching to a diverse population of students, the core subject matter needs to be presented in ways that relate to the different people, places and customs that the children are familiar with. In her article, "Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching," Geneva Gay explains how culturally diverse lesson planning can be practically carried out. A teacher begins by establishing a personal understanding of a given culture or ethnic background. This knowledge base may include popular pastimes and entertainment, important social leaders and their contributions, influential art and literature, and sensitivity to different forms of interpersonal and public communication (Gay, 2002).

In theory, there is no upper limit to the amount of exposure to the target culture a teacher can have, and while time is always in limited supply, an educator should strive for a real appreciation of their students' cultural differences and similarities. In an essay entitled, "Learning from Latino Families," Sandra Auerbach (2011) shows that a teacher's greatest resources for gaining this ethnic insight are the students and their parents. "Educators are meeting to examine their own assumptions and biases so they can counter deficit thinking. They're opening up dialogue with immigrant parents about shared hopes and dreams for their children. They're sponsoring home visits and parent-led community walks to learn more about students' lives and neighborhood resources, as well as families' funds of knowledge and home-based literacy that teachers can integrate with classroom learning" (p. 17). By understanding the children and their parents, teachers can acquire the necessary support for creating lesson plans that effectively engage the students.

Another aspect of the relevance that a lesson should have for its students is its academic content. It is difficult for anyone to approach anything new without referring to related knowledge that they already have. This may be especially true for children. When being introduced to new material, it is important that it would relate to information they are already familiar with. One way to define this concept was put forth by the early 20th century psychologist Lev Vygotsky, whose research contributed to constructivist theories of teaching. He described the Zone of Proximal Development within the learner's mind, in which the gap between what is known and what is being learned can be bridged with temporary assistance. The assistance that teachers can offer varies from lesson to lesson and needs to be determined through assessment. All activities and assignments are an opportunity for the educator to find out what her students already know and how to proceed for further learning. By developing lessons that start with content that the students already have mastery of, a teacher can avoid losing their interest or discouraging them when approaching new subject matter. There is a lot of overlap in the cultural and academic relevance of lesson plans. In both cases, a teacher is essentially taking an inventory of the personalities and intelligence of their students in order to tailor a curriculum that naturally appeals to their curiosities.

While the themes and accessibility of lessons can go a long way towards getting the students' attention, routines and challenges can be very useful for keeping it. Psychologist and teaching instructor, Fred Jones, explains how students' minds are less likely to wander if they are accustomed to a productive class time rhythm consisting of strong routines. He gives the example of *bell work*, or tasks that require no instruction but give the students something to do upon entering the class that will situate them for rest of the period (Charles, 2011). I have seen this practiced in nearly every class room observation I have participated in. Usually there is an itinerary projected on the screen as the students enter that gives them a run-down of the session's proceedings, and a warm-up exercise to get thoughts flowing. Another routine I have witnessed is *journal writes*, which the students can be prompted to do whenever brainstorming or reflecting on a given topic is necessary. Of course, it is important that the journals be collected and reviewed from time to time for accountability.

In terms of routines and challenges, there is a balance to be maintained. If routines involve work that is too easy or repetitive, it will not engage the students effectively, leading to time wasting and the opportunity for distraction. Conversely, if an activity is beyond the skill level of the students it will have the same result. Educational psychologist, Jacob Kounin, emphasized the value of clear expectations and accountability in the class room in order to hit the mark for administering challenging lessons (Charles, 2011). By describing to the students what exactly is to be done in simple and careful language, a teacher can increase the likelihood that they will stay on task. The clarity of instruction is all the more important in a class room containing emergent language learners. Furthermore, requiring the students to produce an oral or written response at the end of an activity gives them a concrete goal to work towards and the responsibility of responding in a meaningful way.

Finally, the importance of respectful interaction must be included in any discussion pertaining to class room management. The mutual respect that governs communication between students and teachers is the basis of a safe and effective learning environment. Professor of psychiatry, Rudolf Dreikurs, taught that respect is more than a rule or a guideline in a class room, but rather an active form of conduct that can encourage self-control in students. His perspective of schools was that they are micro-societies where people who feel they do not belong perceive themselves to be inadequate and resort to behaviors that seek attention, power and revenge (Charles, 2011). Thus, he supported the idea of the democratic classroom to ensure that students feel like valued members who belong to a learning community. By his regard, teachers should include the children in deciding on class room standards so they might become personally vested in their overall experience and recognize their own role in treating and being treated well. In a democratic classroom, rather than focusing on perfection, everyone is encouraged to improve and be helpful towards the others they work with.

Overall, we can see how preparation is key for any teacher and perhaps even more so for education in a culturally diverse society. In order to assist, challenge, or even respect students, a teacher needs to take some time to understand them. Creating a learning experience that is sensitive to those considerations can count as class room management in the sense that results in the students participating in a meaningful way. It could be said that ethnic variance adds extra responsibility to the teaching vocation; however, that is assuming that we have an easier time of understanding each other in a culturally homogeneous setting.

Works Cited

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