Miss Mahrer’s Philosophy on Classroom Management

Catherine Mahrer

University of Mary

EDU 301 02 Classroom Management

Dr. Carmelita Lamb

December 14, 2015

 I remember our first day of classroom management very well. Before we started anything in the class, Dr. Lamb asked us to write down our definition of classroom management in ten words or less. I remember writing something along the lines, “Classroom management is the way in which a teacher uses discipline to manage the students’ behavior in order to keep the classroom quiet in order for the productivity of students’ performance.” After learning so much about classroom management this semester, I realize my vision of classroom management was missing the mark. As we have learned, classroom management is “the provisions and procedures necessary to establish and maintain an environment in which instruction and learning can occur” (Wong, 2014, p. 5). Through this semester, I have learned through Harry Wong, Robert Marzano, and Jim Fay how to make my philosophy of classroom management more about creating an environment in which my students can learn best.

The key motif I learned from Wong in our main textbook for this class is to always be prepared as a teacher. “Good classroom management does not just happen; effective teachers plan good classroom management” (Wong, 2014, p. 6). Wong stressed procedures because he claimed that procedures create consistency, and procedures create consistency not only for the students, but for the teachers as well. For teachers, procedures are a way to prepare for every expected and unexpected situation that occurs in the classroom. Throughout Wong’s textbook, he explains so many different procedures, but I only want to focus on four important procedures; turning in homework, bell-work, asking to go to the bathroom, and “chill time” procedures. Pages five and six list the details of how I would carry out each procedure. I would teach each of these procedures, along with other appropriate procedures, on the first day of school.

After reading parts of Marzano’s *Highly Engaged Classroom*, I learned that not only do procedures play an important role in classroom management, but procedures do not maintain students’ interests on their own. Procedures lay the foundations for a well behaved classroom, and from there teachers must try to maintain student interest. Marzano explained four different methods of how teachers can maintain students’ interest. “Four different ways to trigger and maintain situational interest: (1) using game-like activities, (2) initiating friendly controversy, (3) using unusual information, and (4) using effective questioning strategies” (Marzano, 2011, p. 8-9). I believe all these strategies work well in a mathematics classroom, and I have seen all of these strategies done in my practicum class this semester. For the first two methods, Marzano mentions potential downfalls for these first two methods that teachers need to be aware of; “Teachers should organize competitive games in such a way that students enjoy the challenge but do not feel compelled to win. Competition might have a negative consequence in that it could embarrass some students on losing teams” (Marzano, 2011, p. 10). However, I saw my practicum teacher balance the fine line of positive competitiveness in her classroom, and so I know this can be done well, it just depends on the teacher’s attitude.

My practicum teacher also used unusual information, and effective questioning to maintain her students’ interest. For the third method, Marzano warned teachers that the unusual information might distract from the main topic (Marzano, 2011, p. 11). However, there are so many different unusual mathematical discoveries that the main topic would be that unusual mathematical discovery, so students would not stray from the main topic. The last of Marzano’s four methods is to question effectively, or to ask with purpose. Like my practicum teacher, I want to ask questions that are going to scaffold my students, and to make the students think more in depth about the topic in order to stay engaged. These four methods of Marzano made me realize how I want to engage my students in my classroom, and I plan on using all four methods in the future in order to maintain my students’ interests.

Jim’s Fay’s book, *Creating a Love and Logic School Culture,* has taught me so much this semester about classroom management, but I have two great takeaways that I have learned from this book. My first takeaway is that I want to establish a principles-based classroom, or a classroom with common values, or core beliefs, shared between everyone in my classroom. “These Core Beliefs serve as a code of ethics or guiding light for the way professionals in this school will deal with discipline problems” (Fay, 2011, p.17). Although Fay is speaking of a school adopting this approach, I believe that this approach can be used in a classroom setting as well. Just like the activity we did in class, I would want to establish the classroom core values with my students as a whole class. In typical Love and Logic thinking, I want to share power with my students by giving them the option to help create the shared classroom values, or core beliefs (Fay, 2011, p. 21). My second takeaway from Love and Logic is the theme of building relationships with students by using empathy. “Teachers who use the Love and Logic approach without empathy aren’t using the Love and Logic approach!” (Fay, 2011, p. 105). The theme of empathy is woven throughout all of Fay’s chapters. The theme of empathy really struck me because often I forget that classroom management deals with the relationships with the students, the most important part. When I think of classroom management, I often get caught up in the procedural skills necessary to foster a positive learning environment. I need to remind myself that I am working with other humans, and that means that a huge part of fostering the dynamics of the classroom is fostering the relationships to my students as well. *Creating a Love and Logic School Culture,* has taught me to never forget my two takeaways, my classroom values approach and to be empathetic to develop positive relationships with my students.

After looking back at that first day of class this semester, I realize that my philosophy of classroom management has flipped completely from upside down to right side up. Wong taught me how to set up my room in order to facilitate learning, Marzano taught me how to keep students interested and engaged, and Fay taught me how to create an environment in which I can build student-teacher relationships through empathy. After this semester I can confidently say that my philosophy of classroom management is about how I, Miss Mahrer, can create an environment, both physically and emotionally, in which my students can learn the best.

**Miss Mahrer’s Four Procedures:**

**Turning in Homework Procedure:**

* Students will turn in homework at the beginning of class before they walk to their assigned seat. Along the wall of the classroom, there will be a counter where there will be treys labeled for each period. Students can put their homework in the appropriate period trey, and then they can proceed to their desk.

**Bell-work Procedure:**

* Students are to come into the classroom, and they will have an assigned seating arrangement. If it is a new seating arrangement for them, they can find a sheet of paper with their name on it laying on one desk. They are to remember their seat until the next new seating arrangement.
* Once they take their seat, they can get their notebooks out. They should have a separate notebook for bell-work, or they should have a section (like the back of their notebook) designated for their bell-work. In their bell-work notebook each entry should look like this:

**Date:**

**Question:**

**Answer:**

There will be a bell-work question posted on the board. Below is an example of power point slide for the posted bell-work question.



* Once the bell has rung and once every student has a chance to answer. We will go over the answer briefly. The bell-work question should be a question from the previous days’ lesson that transitions into the lecture for the current day.

**Asking to go to the Bathroom Procedure:**

* If students have to go to the bathroom, rather than simply raising their hand like they would to ask a question, students should raise their hand shaped in the form of a peace sign, meaning they will “peace out” for a couple of minutes to use the restroom.

**“Chill time” Procedure:**

* Students who finish homework, quizzes, or tests either, should remain quiet for the rest of class to stay focused. Students should have options of what they can do in their “chill time.” They can choose to work on other homework, or they can quietly get a math puzzle from the Puzzle Shelf in the back of the room. The Puzzle Shelf will have math puzzles such as Rubik’s cubes, mazes, novels on mathematicians, and other math activities that require only one person.

References

Fay, J. (2011). *Creating a Love and Logic School Culture*. Golden, CO: Love and Logic Institute.

Marzano, R., & Pickering, D. (2011). The Highly Engaged Classroom. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research.

Wong, H., & Wong, R. (2014). *The Classroom Management Book*. Mountain View, CA: Harry K. Wong Publications.