

Cooking Up Some Classroom Management

Professional tennis player, hard-worker, and life-long learner Arthur Ashe said “Success is a journey, not a destination;” and in a classroom full of learners, the journey is long and exciting. It is dynamic and changing- full of small triumphs and failures. The journey is one in which help along the way is necessary. One major aspect of this student-teacher aid that helps learning to occur, knowledge to be gained, and victories to be celebrated is classroom management- a tricky yet vital tool for every teacher to have in his or her tool box.

As a future teacher, in my toolbox, my classroom management will be a concoction of theories, philosophies, and techniques. Some of the theories that I intend on combining to create a well-managed power-house art room are Gentle Teaching, Discipline with Dignity, and Love and Logic. As there are numerous approaches, theories, and suggested “effective” management plans floating around the research world, I’m sure my toolbox will grow as I investigate, explore, and test out first-hand more strategies. From John McGee’s Gentle Teaching, I will emphasize relationship building to connect with the students as well as nurture them, make them feel comfortable, and engage them; once they know I am invested and engaged in them, they will become invested and engaged in me. From Curwin and Mendler’s Disciplining with Dignity, I will pull the emphasis on respecting oneself and accepting oneself in order to feel comfortable as one is- mistake making and all. In this approach, students will be unafraid to inevitably make mistakes, and positivity will be heavily promoted in the art room, which will ultimately yield a less problematic, less negative atmosphere. Lastly, a pinch of Fay and Cline’s Love and Logic will empower the students to realize they have choices and can choose between the moral or the immoral. In this module, consequences and praises will be clear, and owning responsibility will be evident. When dealing with consequences and praising, the teacher is called upon to be fair, level-headed, and consistent.

Although it would be great to be able to pick a theory, or two...or three...and combine them, cook them up, and serve them as a successful and delicious classroom, that is not necessarily the case. Each class’s dynamics will be different, and what works for one class might not work for another; what works for a young age group might not work as well for high schoolers. On that note, the teacher would need to adjust to the learning needs of the students. Thus, there are many tools that I intend on having in my belt at all times, and they are the following: Role Modeling is the first tool. No one is perfect; however, portraying the positive and successful role whether it’s by making good choices, helping out a friend, or demonstrating how to effectively do a process is something that is contagious. Students will see the way their teacher behaves and emulate it. According to the LA Department of Health Services, 56 percent of adolescents identify with role models, and those who identify with role models showed higher levels of self-esteem and stronger academic achievement. The second tool is Choice. Giving students choice in projects is key to help them stay interested in the activities they are doing. Giving them choice in anything and helping them to see that they always have a choice will help them feel like equal, functioning members of the classroom. Shooting off of choices and decision making are the tools of Expectations, in which every teacher should communicate

clearly what his or her expectations are to the students, Consequence and Quick Response, in which it is the teacher's job to make sure the consequences are understood and enforced without delay and Reward/Praise, in which the teacher must promote the encouragement of positive decision making and success through some kind of praise. A Temple University study from leading psychologist Elizabeth Gunderson reflected that this praise was key in the process of development for youth- especially toddlers and young children in which praise resulted in greater persistence and better performance as well as a heightened sense of motivation. Another really important set of tools are Communication and Community, in which the teacher must always have open lines of communication between the students and him or herself. These lines could be verbal during class or outside of class by having an open door, or the lines could be nonverbal through body language, note writing, a suggestion box, or a "post-secret" mailbox. This communication needs to extend into the community and through a student's front door to their parents, guardians, and friends- a student's support network. Downtime, Physical Activities, and Social Opportunities are classroom management tools often overlooked and avoided due to their ability to be misused and abused by students; however, I think they are vital. We all have energy we need to expel. Sometimes this energy builds up and prevents us from focusing or working to our full capacity. By providing outlets and breaks for students (and themselves), teachers can promote personal control, successful work ethic, and personal satisfaction. For example, according to the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, something as simple as student recess or 15 minutes of unstructured playtime can significantly improve behavior and learning ability in a single day.

All of these are fantastic, functioning, and successful tools that I want to keep in my classroom management toolbox; however, there are a couple of tools that I will use all of the time to help me manage my room, that align with my personal self, and that will help me enjoy my profession. For me, these are the most important tools. The first is Personability and the second is Humor. In all that I do, I will show my students that I am personable and friendly. I will show them I am human and share appropriate aspects of my life with them. Through this, we will be able to connect and develop relationships. My students will get to know me, and I will get to know them. Similar to Disciplining with Dignity, they will become invested in me and my assignments not only because they can connect to them, but also because we will have a mutual bond of caring and investment. This will create a warm and positive atmosphere that will be further nurtured through my use of appropriate humor. Perhaps the only thing more powerful than a smile is a laugh; and laughing is something that young adults do between only two and sixteen times each day. Full grown adults- even less. Not only will humor be used to create a positive classroom air, but it will also be used to diffuse situations and help to remedy conflicts. By promoting genuine happiness all of the time, my classroom will be a successful and enjoyable environment. I agree with UNICEF's results: a child or individual learns best and most successfully retains information when they are happy; so by creating a progressive environment, and managing the classroom in a positive way with positive tools, learning can abound and personal growth can follow.

Outline/Brainstorming

What is Classroom Management?

→mix it up

→cooking

→toolbox

Disc. W Dignity

Gentle Teaching

Love and Logic

Other theories?

Other tools?

→toolbox

→toolbelt

Important Classroom Management Tools To Me...

- Role Model
- Positivity
- Choice
- Responsibility
- Expectations
- Consequence
- Quick Response
- Rewards/Praise
- Communication
- Community
- Downtime
- Physical Activities
- Social Opportunities
- Personability
- Humor