Reflection on classroom management philosophy

A teaching philosophy is essential for any teacher to have. It establishes important pieces of a teachers' character and items that they see as necessary and important to run an effective classroom. Having a philosophy for classroom management is ideal, especially when applying for teaching positions. Principals should have an idea about what you feel is important in a classroom and how it should be run. Classroom management is one of the most important things to have established as a teacher. Without it, teaching becomes quite difficult and everything else could easily fall apart. There are three different approaches to classroom management and they include essentialism, constructivism, and social reform. The approach that I will mostly use in my future classrooms is the constructivist approach. This approach is when the teacher is a facilitator of class democracy where students play a key role in the development and decision-making process. There is a shared ownership of rules, activities, behaviors and even of the classroom between the students and the teacher. This approach is so perfect for elementary school grades because it gives students the opportunity to be heard, shares their thoughts, feelings, and ideas about most everything, but at the same time give the teacher an opportunity to set guidelines and give structure. There are some items that I will touch on that are so important to use when establishing classroom management. These items include getting to know your students, classroom environment, motivation and rule-making, conflicts and communication, and group issues. I will demonstrate my approach to each of these topics and give examples of how I will best use these ideas in my classroom.

Getting to know your students is so vital to do. It helps to create long, trusting relationships where the students can see you as a positive mentor and someone who they can talk to about pretty much anything they need to. To get to know your students however you need to understand yourself. I feel that it is very important to understand your own biases and values. Once you do that and understand the kind of cultural lens you look through you can better understand how to reach out to your students and begin to create a positive relationship with them. As a future teacher, I want to give students opportunities to share things about themselves. I want to give them assignments or projects that they can take and create something that reflects their individuality. I don't like the idea of seeing all my students do the same exact projects. I want to see diversity in their work as much as there is diversity in my classroom.

Each student is very different and as a teacher, it is important to recognize this and accommodate the needs that they have. Students need to be recognized, understood whether it be from a learning basis or a cultural basis. If you learn about students likes, dislikes, what things affect them the best and what things won't work with each of them it helps me to know how to best accommodate them while still pushing them to reach higher standards. It is also very important to know where their students are at developmentally. Each stage of development is very different so recognizing these would help in teaching them.

A student in my mentor teachers class really struggled to follow rules, as well as showed a lack of respect for my mentor teacher and other adults and even classmates he came into contact with. One day as I was observing, I

pulled him aside and asked him what he liked to do. He told me that he loved Pokémon and he was upset that his dad didn't buy him any more Pokémon cards which I understood his behavior because of that. The rest of my observation we talked about Pokémon cards and what ones were best and the worst. I spoke with my mentor teacher and we came up with a behavioral plan for him that included Pokémon cards. We implemented the plan the next day and he became so excited that he was more than happy to treat his teacher, other adults and his classmates with respect and he started to follow rules better than he had ever before. This behavior would not have changed if I wouldn't have gotten to know his likes and a little bit of his background. Like this example I hope to be able to accomplish similar tasks like this in the future.

A classroom environment is so important and includes everything from sound, lighting, and autonomy. As a constructivist teacher, I take this to pride. I want to create an environment where students feel safe, are treated with respect and where they feel they can learn with great understanding. I want to set my classroom up with different seating. I don't like regular desks because I feel that students become so confined to them but will use them if students need a space to work individually. I would love to take advantage of the space in my classroom and use the open space for physical active learning. I would like to set the desks up around the center of the classroom, so it gives me and the students room to be active. I feel that for many students, the recess time they have been given is not enough to get all of their energy out, so I want to utilize that energy into active learning such as learning content of science or math but song or dance or drama role play. I

feel the students would enjoy it and they would be able to absorb more if they did things physically on their own. Not only is the setup of student seating important but so is the surrounding decorations. I want to have basic bulletin boards and calendars and the reason being is because I want my students to create this space. This is an area in which they will learn and grow in every day, so I want to give them the opportunity to make it their own. I want to make a small section of things that I like and want to incorporate like maybe a monthly theme or something of that nature but for the most part, I want to see the diversity that every student brings to the classroom.

I feel that not only physical environment is important but practices that create a safe space of learning are important as well. Routines are so important for children as well as teachers to keep everything organized and students know what to expect. One routine that I want to incorporate into my classroom is morning meetings. It gives everyone an opportunity to share the good or bad things that are happening in their lives at the moment. Morning meetings help to set a theme for how the rest of the day goes. " Morning Meeting is a particular and deliberate way to begin the day, a way that builds a community of caring and motivated learners" (Crowe, 2009, p. 275). Morning meetings will be a place where I share the tentative schedule of the day, any important announcements, give students a time to share anything they would like to and lastly will do a group building activity. Morning meetings help to create a sense of community among the students that feel safe where they can be themselves. An example of a morning meeting could be a student in my class may be so excited for the day

because it is their birthday and they can contain themselves. Morning meeting would be an awesome time to sing happy birthday or give that student an opportunity to share their feelings and get those excited jitters out so they can learn.

When it comes to rules and student motivation, I am definitely taking a constructivist stance. I do want rules set up that are necessary for the well-being of the class and students, but I want my students to help with them. I can guide them through things that I feel are really important such as respect of others when they are talking. This way they know what is expected of them, but they also understand that they do have a say on what rules they want to set up together as a class. The rules that I feel are going to be set up before they walk into the classroom are rules that the school should follow such as quietly walk in the hallways, so you do not disturb other classes and a few others based on where I am teaching. I want to do things this way because " cooperative relationships with adults foster [autonomous] type of morality and help children develop high levels of self-regulation…. Children and adults are not equals. However, when the adult respects the child as a person with a right to exercise his or her will, their relationship has a certain psychological equality that promotes autonomy" (DeVries and Zan, 2003, p. 64). I understand that young children need structure and rules to follow but I feel that it is really important for them to understand that they have a voice that has meaning and reason behind it and it is important to share their opinion. This is how strong, independent children are developed. The first day of school my students will come into my classroom and we will have a discussion about rules and norms. I want them

to discuss what rules should be expected of them to follow as well as norms. We will discuss that rules are written down and followed so that things run smoothly in the classroom as well as in the school. We will talk about what norms are and how they are expected to follow them out of the courtesy of being a good person. After we come up with a list of rules that we feel are really important I wanted to have small groups take one rule and create a poster with drawings and writing to demonstrate that they know and understand what is expected. If students help to create rules and know what they need to do it will make them more intrinsically motivated. They won't rely so much on treats or prizes but more on the feelings that they know and understand what they need to do.

A class of students that is built on trust, safety, and understanding will only help to make conflicts and communication that much easier. One tool I definitely want to incorporate into my classroom is I-messages. By personal experience they really do work and it helps to keep situations calm and rational. Sometimes it's hard for young children to use their words to communicate their feelings but if I provide the opportunity to give them the tools they need to solve their own conflicts the students become that much more independent. When using an I-message you state what behavior is not acceptable then state your feelings and explain why you feel that way. For example, say one of my students takes another student a pencil and they start arguing about it. The steps that I will teach them to include these: first they need to cool off, then the child who is upset will think of an I-statement and ask to talk to the other child. Then they will speak to one another about there I-statements and they will discuss how to come up with a solution

together. This practice would work the absolute best if it were practiced first. Using role-playing is a good way for practicing tough situations and slowing them down so students can think about them rationally. Sometimes they just need to see how things work before they can do them on their own. Role-playing is a perfect tool to help solve group issues as well. It is also a perfect fit for my philosophy because it gives my students practice and guidelines to solve difficult situations, but it gives them the opportunity to use their own skills and knowledge as well as their own unique ways of figuring things out on their own. I want to promote a class where we can all work together to solve problems and where everyone's opinion is taken into account. Back to my example of the students fighting over a pencil, I would have a class discussion and we would talk about the situation, what positive goals we wanted to reach in solving this and I would record their ideas. After the brainstorming session we act it out and I will take the part with the tricky role. This role would be the one that came up with an I-statement about how I felt about the situation. We would then talk as a class to see what we discovered. Then we would switch up the roles again and the students would be doing all the parts. We would just keep acting out the different ideas that we had come up with in our discussion. As a constructivist, I hope to use this as a platform for students to work together to solve problems rather than myself solving all of their problems.

The only way this will work if the students really listen to each other. Active listening is so important with student versus student conflicts and other conflicts as well. The children just want to be heard and acknowledged so I feel that this is very beneficial, and I know that from personal experiences

that these statements really work. Granted with younger children aid may be needed to help them to figure solutions out and make sure that they follow the steps needed but I feel that this could work with most elementary classrooms. In order for the students to really know how to do this roleplay is very important. Students need to practice role playing so that they understand how to go about situations like this when they arise.

To solve group issues, class meetings are very important to utilize. The purpose of class meetings is to enable a group to solve a problem, share information, and use reasonable thinking all while thinking about classroom rules. This gives students the opportunity to work with others on a similar goal while also being able to share their feelings and understandings with one another. Class meetings teach children to work together, respect everyone's needs and compromise to reach an agreement. They should be used when agreed upon rules aren't working, when a problem involves all group members, and when you want student input. For example, if my students are lined up walking through the hallway to go to recess but are rowdy and disrespectful, a class meeting is necessary. I would lead the meeting by asking if they thought that behavior was appropriate and why. The students would give me thoughts and opinions. Then we would review our class rules and see if we have been following them. My ideal class meeting would be having my students do must of the talking and I would just help facilitate the discussion.

I feel this is the philosophical approach that best fits my personality and style of teaching. Children at a young age do need guidelines and structure but also want to be heard. If follow my philosophy I will be giving students the

basic social and life skill needed to become a good friend and a hard-working, independent individua. These skills are necessary to become a successful citizen as well as becoming a good person. As a constructivist, I want to supply my students with the tools and scaffolding they need to be successful but hopefully be able to slowly step out when my students begin to take on independent roles in solving their own conflicts and become autonomous people.

Sources:

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- Devries , R., & Zan, B. (2003). When Children Make Rules. *Educational Leadership* , 64.