

EDUCATION 2010

Introduction to Education

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CHAPTER 1

Teachers and the Teaching Profession



WHY TEACH?

Why do teachers teach? It is a rather simple question, however the question, what is a teacher, must be addressed first. Merriam-Webster's definition of a teacher is "one whose occupation is to instruct" (Merriam-Webster, 2008, para. 1). That is a rather one dimensional definition of a teacher, as teachers these days offer so much more to the class than just the information; they offer themselves. A collective definition of a teacher, is someone who "yearns to help children learn, watch them grow, and make a meaningful difference in the world" (Teacher Support Network, 2007, para. 2). This definition must be the main reason as to why individuals pursue teaching as a career. Generally the pay is low to fair, but the overall rewards are much greater. As a teacher, one can touch the hearts of the

young and open their minds in order to tap their thirst for knowledge.

The Road Ahead

Becoming a teacher is a lengthy process. In the State of Michigan, you will have to obtain a Bachelor's Degree, as well as pass certification tests. You are taking your first step by taking this course. If you have not done so already, you will need to decide on the level you wish to teach, Elementary or Secondary, as well as your academic subject major(s) and minor(s). All of your coursework here at Macomb, as well as at the university, will depend on the level you wish to teach and your major and minor.

Michigan is in the process of changing certification levels. There are five bands being proposed:

- Prekindergarten to Grade 3
- Grades 3 through 6
- Grades 5 through 9
- Grades 7 through 12
- Prekindergarten (PK)-12

More information can be found at [Michigan Department of Education Revised Certification Structure](#).

As you consider the grades you are looking to teach, consider these certification bands. Talking with an advisor at your chosen four year university will help you decide what may be best for you. Each university will have their own requirements. Some of them will require you to spend a certain number of hours working with students before you can apply for acceptance into the program. Other universities may require you to write an admission essay. At this stage in your development, you should sit down with an advisor from the university you wish to attend. They will be able to map out a course for you so that you make the best use of your time and money, as well as know the process for acceptance into their university.

Teacher's Salaries Across the US

Teaching is not a pocket cushioning job, but one with long hours and a flat rate of pay. The income of course, depends on where the teacher is instructing. Private schools, parochial schools, and charter schools, in general, tend to have lower pay scales. This is because they may not have the same revenue base as the public schools. However, educators may choose to teach in these schools because of the schools' philosophy, religious preferences, or a variety of other reasons. Regardless of the reason, most educators will agree they went into teaching because they have the desire to spread knowledge, and/or to watch children reach their full potential.

Passion

There are multiple factors in deciding to become a teacher. For one, it is a healthy alternative to other professions as the TDA's research has found that about twice as many teachers truly enjoy their work, as opposed to those who have careers in marketing, IT and accounting (TDA, In Summary, para. 1). Work is not truly work, if it is enjoyed. For example, Beth Ashfield, a math teacher, spoke of her job with passion, "I love my subject, but I know it's not socially acceptable to say that... in school, I can be as enthusiastic as I want to be. I'm able to convey that enthusiasm to the students, to allow them to become confident and creative in their approach to the subject" (TDA, Beth Ashfield, Maths teacher, para. 1). Becoming a teacher was important for her, due to her great love of a particular subject, and the desire to share it with others in hopes that they might discover the same for themselves. As a teacher one is always learning, whether it is of one's content material, or something new from a pupil. Being a teacher requires an open mind, for the teacher is always the student. A teacher guides his or her charges on a path to self discovery where they can learn about the world, and ultimately, themselves.

Love

Beyond passion, another reason that teachers teach is simply for the love of teaching. As stated by (Liston & Garrison, 2003) Love is a "creative, critical, and disruptive force in teaching and learning." A teacher who loves his or her job will be a better teacher and have a greater impact on the students he or she influences. Classroom efforts to manage, instruct, and direct groups of twenty to thirty students frequently requires a feelings for others and an intuition that connects teacher to student and to subject matter (Liston & Garrison, 2003). For the new teacher, the multiple tasks entailed in this activity can be overwhelming. (Liston & Garrison, 2003) For the experienced teacher, they can seem almost unconscious (Liston & Garrison, 2003). Most teachers truly have passion for what they do, but they also have a love for it as well.

Creativity Is Key



"Every person is unique and the challenge is to find fun ways to guide individuals to learn and understand what they are interested in learning" (B. Anders, personal communication, February 2, 2008). There are many ways to be creative in the classroom, whether it is using projects, videos, and presentations, but what if the creativity stemmed from the teacher?

Being creative is important in teaching, for the students are the audience. No one knows this better than entertainers, who are creative and use their ingenuity to bring to life rather dull aspects of education. This in and of itself is talent, and there are those who devote themselves to that. Paul Keogh, a Modern Languages teacher, had always aspired to be an entertainer, however, he chose teaching as his profession instead. He does not regret this choice for he's always got someone to perform for. He equated teaching to entertainment, but more importantly he remarks, "I love to see them growing personally, socially and academically" (TDA, Paul Keogh, Modern Languages teacher, para. 3). This statement itself encompasses the point of education, for there cannot be growth without learning.

The Rewards

The rewards received by being a teacher are different than those received by someone like a salesman, for example. If a salesman is doing well, he makes his quota, and he then earns his monetary bonus. It is possible that he receives a plaque to hang behind his desk stating that he was the number one salesman for this period in time. Teachers' rewards are not so tangible, but rather, "They are rewarded more by witnessing their students succeed and follow their

dreams than by any plaque" (Daily Egyptian, 2005, para. 7). A group of school teachers who had participated in a study that

looked into why teachers taught in high challenge schools, jointly agreed that what their students achieve under their instruction was reward enough for all the time that they devote to their students. "Student achievement was another reward the teachers discussed as a reason for staying. When their students were successful, the teachers felt incredibly rewarded." (Morris, 2007, pg 58). The reward teachers receive is a feeling, and feelings are more special and memorable than gold and silver plaques hung stoically on a wall proclaiming an individual's success. For teaching, it is not about what the teachers can achieve, but what they can get their students to achieve, and through their students, reflects a teacher's greatest achievement.

Why do teachers teach?

To address the opening question, "Why do teachers teach?", the answer is simple; "They teach for the love of children and to contribute to the well-being of all of us" (Teachers are Important, 1998, para. 4). It is something inside them. It is a drive, a force, a passion, a talent that they wish to dispel upon his or her students in order to watch them succeed. Choosing to be a teacher is not for the money, as a teacher's monetary compensation is hardly adequate given all that they give to their students. Becoming a teacher is almost like heeding a calling. It is not for the light at heart, but rather, for those who love children and people, who have a passion for education, and who love to share in that passion. Teachers yearn to see the burning desire to learn, and love to see the excitement of discovery, and that, is why teachers teach.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD TEACHER?

There are many qualities and characteristics that make up a good teacher. Engaging, caring and innovative are some things that may come to mind. According to Dr. Richard M. Reis, a professor and executive director at Stanford University, the top priority of teachers should be that they want to be good teachers. In his article he states that as teachers "we respect students who really try, even if they do not succeed in everything they do, so they will respect us, even if we are not as good as we want to be" (Reis, 2007). Your future students will know that you want to be a good teacher if you yourself strive to become one. There are many opinions on what goes into a good teacher, but only you can implement the characteristics in your own teaching career.



From the time I was a very young child, I wanted to be a teacher. I played school with friends and family and never considered another path. In the late 70's, when I was entering college, there was an over abundance of teachers. Family and school personnel tried to persuade me to choose another career. I took all the business classes in high school so I had a fall back, but I never wavered from my desire to teach.

My first classroom presented many challenges: challenges my teacher education program did not prepare me for. I had all the "textbook knowledge", but now I was in the "real world." Throughout the course I want to try and share as much of the "real world" with you as I can. I also encourage you to share your classroom experiences in the "At the Teacher's Desk" discussion forum.

As I look at the teacher I was then, and the one I am over 30 years later, there is a remarkable difference! Sometimes I feel bad for those students in my early years. If I could go back, I would change so many things! One aspect of being a professional is reflecting on your practices and making necessary changes that will benefit your students. Always look at what you are doing in the classroom and ask yourself if there is any way you can improve on what you're doing.

As parents, we tend to raise our children with some of the same strategies and practices of our parents. Likewise, teachers tend to teach in the same manner in which they were taught. While this is not necessarily a mistake, it is also not the most effective way to fulfill either role.

As teachers, we set the climate for the classroom. We model for students the behaviors we expect from them, we set up learning experiences, and set expectations for their work, behavior and personal development. We also teach social skills. Teachers are a major force in a student's success or failure and much of that has to do with the environment we set up and maintain.

We are the individual who facilitates the learning process. It is our responsibility to guide and support students in their learning endeavors. We set up a classroom with consistent routines and expectations to encourage and promote learning. We

plan learning activities, employ instructional strategies and guide students in their social interactions, all in an effort to foster learning. We set up the environment that we feel will be the most productive for our students.

In order to fulfill the previous two roles, we have to make countless decisions. Some of our decisions will be easily accepted and others will not be. The list of decisions we have to make is endless. There are some decisions we will make having the benefit of time to think and reflect, and other decisions we will have to make on the spur of the moment. All of our decisions will have an impact on our effectiveness as an educator and on how others view us in this role.

To assist us in making some of these decisions, we have to practice reflection. We have to look at our practices, student progress, and our relationships to see what is working and what can be improved. This particular course has been in existence for several years now and there have been many changes made based on student feedback and my reflection. I have changed assignments, learning activities, and even the text we use. We also have to reflect on new information we may receive and make decisions on how we may incorporate it into our learning environment, or disregard it if it is not credible or beneficial for our students.

We also have to be an advocate for our students. We have to stand up for what we think is most beneficial for them, defend them when necessary and be their “cheerleader”. For example, when this course was being designed, there was great discussion on the field work portion. The question seemed to be whether we let students choose where they observe, or if the college should place them. I strongly believed that the students should be in a situation that they were comfortable in for this first experience in the classroom. The only way I could see this happening was if students had the opportunity to decide which schools, grade levels, teachers, etc. they would work with. Many students go back to the schools they attended, with teachers they felt were effective. I stood up for my students and advocated for what I thought would be the best opportunity for them.

One thing I want to caution you on, and I can't emphasize this enough, is making assumptions and judgments about your students! As human beings, we see situations, people's actions, or their lack of action, and we make assumptions. We assume that the parent doesn't care about their child's learning because they never come to a conference or help with homework. **DO NOT MAKE THESE TYPES OF ASSUMPTIONS!!!! They are unfair to your students, unprofessional, and will not help you provide the best possible learning experience for your students!** If you can't tell, I feel very strongly about this!

Several years ago, I heard a teacher speak about her experiences in the classroom. She told the story of a little girl in her class and her very active mother. Mother was always helping out in class, she sent notes in to the teacher, attended parent/teacher conferences and the little girl always talked about mom helping her with homework. On the last conference of the year, a man came with mom. This teacher said she was surprised and immediately introduced herself. This man introduced himself as the little girl's dad. She was absolutely floored! She had assumed all along that this girl only had a mom. She had harbored feelings of sympathy for the girl in not having a dad and admitted to making allowances for some things based on this thought. Now, here was dad standing before her. As the conversation went on, dad admitted that he was not a very good reader and the reason he never came to conferences was because he was afraid his daughter's teacher might ask him to read something he would have difficulty with. He did not want to be embarrassed or humiliated, so he stayed away.

This is a perfect example of how our assumptions can influence our practice in the classroom. While this one had no real negative effect, I have seen many that do. Students who appear to not want to learn or have no desire to do their work are often labeled as “not caring” or “not wanting to learn.” Teachers sometimes then do not put forth the necessary effort to help them learn because they don't feel the child wants to learn. 99.9% of the time, this is a wrong assumption!! Many of these children are struggling with the skills necessary to complete the work, they don't see the relevance of the material, they don't understand the assignment or they just don't know how to do it. They are too ashamed and humiliated to ask for help or take the risk of trying and fail, once again. It is psychologically safer for them to shut down and do nothing. Teachers make incorrect judgments and assumptions about these students and they do not give them what they really need in order to succeed. It's so sad.

So, long story short, do not assume and do not make judgments. ALWAYS talk with students and find out what is happening; what the exact situation is. It is only then that you can really help a student succeed.

The next idea is developing dispositions. These are the attitudes and beliefs we have about learning. These dispositions are evident in your philosophy of education. One very important disposition is the belief that all students can learn. If you cannot fully believe in this statement and work towards this goal, you need to find a different career because you will never be an effective teacher. *EVERY STUDENT CAN LEARN! What they learn, how they learn and the rate they learn will vary, but they all can learn.*

When we have this positive disposition in regards to learning, we then can foster that in our students. We want them to develop a “Growth Mindset”. This is the belief that they can learn anything, but they recognize it will take time and work to do so. We want them to be strong and never give up. We want them to believe in themselves and their abilities. In order to do this, however, they are going to have to experience success and it will be up to us to support them and help them experience that success.

The last idea is our continued growth in both our knowledge base and our skills. As teachers, we will never have an end to our own education. It is a MUST that we continue to attend workshops, seminars, take classes, etc. to keep ourselves up to date on the latest in education and further develop our teaching skills. You wouldn't want to go to a doctor who hadn't been

back to a class or seminar since they graduated and we don't want teachers in the classroom who haven't done that either. Be active! Seek out educational opportunities. It's not too early to begin now! Look for conferences, workshops and such that you can attend. You don't have to wait until you have a teaching certificate to engage in these educational opportunities. In order to maintain certification, you will be required to take additional college courses and attend conferences, etc. Start thinking now about what you want your masters to be. You will be working towards this as you take classes for maintaining certification.

In our profession, we often speak of "effective teachers". You will see this term in the media when the discussion centers around teachers and what is happening in classrooms. You will also hear it when there is discussion of how to evaluate teachers. Effective teachers make a difference in students' lives and use a variety of strategies to reach their students. They set up productive classrooms and they work to see that every student is successful. Students have identified these as characteristics of an effective teacher.

- Push students to learn
- Maintain orderly classrooms
- Are willing to help
- Explain until everyone understands
- Vary classroom activities
- Try to understand students

Corbett and Wilson, 2002

There are four terms I want to introduce to you now and we will be using them throughout the semester:

1. **General Pedagogy:** *This refers to the general beliefs a teacher has in regards to education and teaching. It is a teacher's philosophy.*
2. **Content Knowledge:** *This means knowing the content that you are teaching. You will never know everything, but you must have a firm mastery of the content in order to teach it to others.*
3. **Pedagogical Content Knowledge:** *This refers to knowing how to teach your content. It is knowing the order to teach material, such as teaching number recognition and one-to-one correspondence before teaching addition. It is also knowing what activities and assignments to present for a given concept.*
4. **Knowledge of Learners and Learning:** *Teachers must have a solid understanding of how learning takes place, what students need in order to learn, and how best to support their learning. On top of this, teachers must know the students in their classroom and what works for each of them.*

Add these terms to your vocabulary list. We will refer to these throughout the semester and you will want to know them as a professional.

If you talk to any educator, you will get a variety of ideas on what professionalism is. You will develop your own ideas. For me personally, professionalism includes:

- Making students my first priority
- Creating a productive learning environment for every student
- Continuing my own education
- Avoiding gossip and speaking ill of students (You have probably heard some of the talk in the teacher's lounge about students.)
- Accepting responsibility for mistakes I make and working to correct them.
- Accepting and respecting each student and their families
- Maintaining open communication with students (and families)
- Collaborating with colleagues
- Providing students with timely feedback on assignments

There are just a few of my beliefs. You will learn more about my beliefs as we progress throughout the semester.

For some, teaching is an overwhelming task. I have had many parents who have said, "I could never do what you do." We are all given different talents and interests and that's what "makes the world go around." I will, however, not fail to remind you that this career is a challenge. We have many responsibilities and expectations placed upon us. Everyone will have an opinion on what we do and they may not always agree with what we do. We are responsible, first and foremost, to our students!

We do have a responsibility to keep parents informed of their child's progress. We also need to look for ways to involve

parents in our classrooms. Many teachers feel this is one of the biggest challenges they face. Busy schedules, attitudes and indifference about education and parental/teacher expectations make it difficult. Newsletters, emails, phone calls, a classroom website, and parent/teacher conferences are all ways we can pass along information to parents. Please don't fall into the trap of believing that parents don't necessarily care about their child because you don't see them as much as you would like to. Many of them do, but life circumstances, pressures and demands on their time may effect the amount of attention they can give you and their child.

You will not be teaching within a bubble. You will have colleagues within your school and district to work and collaborate with. As in any working relationship, keep the lines of communication open. Maintain an open mind in discussions. Just because you do things differently than a colleague, it doesn't mean they don't have an idea that will work just as well as yours, or better. Get yourself involved in school and district committees and activities. Attend school board meetings so you know about the decisions being made that will affect your work in the classroom. It will also make you aware of the community's feelings in regards to the work you do.

Your professional reputation begins now!

I challenge you to begin thinking like a teacher and take responsibility for your learning. Your reputation begins with your college coursework. Attend class regularly and arrive and leave at the designated times. Read work that is assigned and be prepared for classes. Turn your work in on the designated due dates and be certain you have done your best to meet the expectations of the assignments. Do not expect your professors to make allowances for you and your life. You have made the decision to be an educator and this means you have to make the sacrifices in your life in order to get the work done. Plan well! Don't wait until the last minute to complete assignments or study for tests. Seek out additional information for things you do not understand and ask questions! These are all practices that will carry over into your role as a teacher.

While it takes hard work and perseverance, in my humble opinion, teaching is one of the best professions there is! Your journey is beginning and I hope you enjoy the ride!

WHY DO TEACHERS LEAVE THE PROFESSION?

Teacher attrition has been on the rise for the past two decades and it is no surprise that it has become a major concern. (Brooks-Young, 2007). Every year, approximately one-third of the nation's teaching force turns over and the retention rate of new teachers after five years is only sixty-one percent. (Kersaint, 2007). Researchers believe that teacher shortages are caused not by lack of interest in teaching, but by too many teachers leaving the profession (Williby, 2004). What must be addressed are the factors affecting teachers' decisions to leave, the effects on the students and schools of low teacher retention, and the possible solutions to increase teacher retention.

Factors Influencing Teacher Turnover

According to Smithers and Robinson, there are five main reasons for teachers leaving the profession: workload, new challenges, school situations, salary, and personal circumstances. Among those five main reasons, workload was the most important factor in affecting teacher turnover, while salary was the least important (Smithers & Robinson, 2003).

Workload

Being a teacher is not an easy job. Teachers must teach their students, as well as complete paperwork, lesson plans, assessments, etc., and at times this can be overwhelming. There is an increase on assessment and accountability of teachers, which means there is an emphasis on testing, evaluation, and passing state standards. Teachers are required to teach to state standards and for their students to pass standardized tests, adding another requirement to be placed upon teachers. Also, many times, teachers are expected to sponsor a club or activity on top of everything else they must do. This means spending more time at school working. Meeting these requirements and juggling these tasks can be hard and frustrating, especially for new teachers with little experience.

New Challenges

New challenges often cause new, inexperienced teachers to leave the profession. For the most part, their first few years in the classroom are spent trying to get organized, get a grasp on the pace of teaching the material, and learning how to effectively manage a classroom. Disruptive or troublesome students can make a teacher's job that much more difficult by having to deal with the students and in some cases having

the classroom are spent trying to get organized, get a grasp on the pace of teaching the material, and learning how to effectively manage a classroom. Disruptive or troublesome students can make a teacher's job that much more difficult by having to deal with the students and in some cases having to take disciplinary actions.

The inclusion of special needs students also poses an additional challenge for teachers. Many do not receive adequate training for working with the various special needs that may be present in their classroom. If you have the chance to take courses that will add to your knowledge and skills in regards to this population of students, do so. It may delay your graduation a semester, but it will be well worth it once you are in the classroom.



School Situations

School situations encompasses many different things. It can be how the school is run, who runs the school, what type of programs are available to teachers, geographical setting of the school, and much more. Geography can play a major role in affecting a teacher's decision on whether to leave the profession. In rural settings, the main reasons for teachers leaving was due to cultural differences, the geography (i.e. being too far away from a city or town), and professional isolation (Williby, 2004). For urban settings, the reasons for leaving were an emphasis to oversee extracurricular activities and whether they were teaching at an at-risk school. How the school is run is also another factor causing teachers to leave. A lack of administrative support is damaging to a teacher's self-esteem, poor facilities cause teachers to become frustrated, and insufficient mentoring leaves the teacher with nowhere to look for advice, and ultimately cause teachers to leave.

Personal Circumstances

Since teaching requires a lot of time and effort, sometimes personal circumstances can affect a teacher's decision on whether or not to leave. The most common personal circumstance that causes teachers to leave is family. This encompasses everything from pregnancy, spending more time with family, and taking care of family. For women who get pregnant while teaching, they may find it more cost effective to leave and become a stay-at-home mother (Kersaint, 2007). For other teachers, quality time with their family and taking care of their family is very important and the workload of being a teacher doesn't allow them much time to do this. Age is also another personal circumstance that causes teachers to leave. Typically, it is younger teachers or older teachers approaching retirement that usually leave the teaching profession. For older teachers, there is a direct correlation with early retirement and pension-plans. (Ingersoll, 2001). This means that it is more likely for an older teacher to retire if they have a pension plan.

Effects of Teacher Turnover

For the school systems, teacher turnover is a fiasco. It drains resources, diminishes teacher quality, undermines the ability to close the gap of student achievement, and is financially burdening. (NCTAF, 2007). Resources are drained due to the need for experienced teachers to train and mentor new teachers. Financially, schools are suffering from teacher turnover because of the cost of recruiting, hiring, advertising, and providing incentives (Harris & Adams, 2007). Ultimately, the effects of teacher turnover on the school systems directly impacts the students; the financial cost of teacher turnover takes money away from other projects that could be beneficial to the students. The quality of teachers hired directly impacts student learning and student achievement, and the school community and effectiveness can be destroyed. The effects of teacher turnover are astounding, not only for the school systems, but for the students as well. Teacher turnover can have a negative effect on student learning. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, inexperienced teachers are noticeably less effective than senior teachers. These new, inexperienced teachers passing in and out of the school systems can have an emotional and physiological effect on students and student learning.

Boosting Teacher Retention

So now the question is, "What can be done to boost teacher retention?" Teachers leave the profession for several reasons

well as advice on how to improve performance. These types of programs also prepare teachers on what to expect and how to effectively do their job. Studies show that teachers who receive intensive mentoring are less likely to leave than those who receive little to no mentoring. (Williby, 2004).

In Macomb County, the Macomb Intermediate School District offers a “New Teacher’s Academy.” This is a series of workshops aimed to support teachers in their first years of teaching. This is a great way to network with other teachers and gain support and ideas.

Other ways to boost teacher retention include new administrative and organizational strategies. Since workload is the major reason for teachers leaving the profession, strategies such as job sharing or part-time work may be more appealing to some teachers, or time to get work done during the school day through extended planning time, etc.

Hiring incentives are also another way to boost teacher retention. Although salary is not the biggest force driving teachers away from the profession, incentives would give them more of a reason to stay. These incentives include: hiring bonuses, health insurance, pension plans, and higher salaries.

Teacher turnover is a growing problem and must be solved

The reasons for why teachers leave the profession vary from teacher to teacher, but there is no doubt that something must be done to boost teacher retention. Teacher turnover effects student learning, student achievement, and the school systems. The cost is astounding, and new programs and strategies must be developed so teacher retention does not become an even bigger problem than it already is.

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CHAPTER 2

School Laws and Organization

WHO IS THE BOSS? HOW ARE INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS GOVERNED?

The Hierarchy of the System

Who is the boss in the school systems? The public school governing system is actually a hierarchy (March, 1978). There are several tiers to this hierarchy beginning with the federal level and ending with the individual teachers. It is a pyramid of administrators doing everything they can to educate today's students.

Federal and State

While some may believe that administration of schools starts with the federal government, the truth is that on the federal level there is very little involvement in education, even in funding (Federal Role, n.d.). The federal government sets some guidelines for education, such as the "Every Student Succeeds Act", but not specific ones such as curriculum taught. In actuality, the states have most of the power over their own schools and what they teach (Education Commission of the States [ECS], 1999). The states set what the students will learn and what standards they have to meet. This means that if a child is meeting their grade level standard in Tennessee they may or may not be meeting the Virginia standards for that grade level. States try to decide what knowledge is imperative for students to learn before they move on to the next grade or even college (ECS, 1999).

The "Common Core Standards" are an attempt to "level the playing field." The process began in 2009 with a group of state governors and school officials. The idea was to create real-life, relevant learning goals that could be adopted by states, and lead to our students learning the same things at the same time. With this idea, that same student in Tennessee would be working on the same standards as the student in Virginia. The CCS, however, were not mandated by the federal government, nor created by the federal government and this is important to know. It was a state initiative and states had the right to adopt the standards or not. Not all states have adopted the CCS, and some adopted the standards and then repealed them. More information on the Common Core Standards can be found at [Common Core State Standards Initiative](#).

Michigan adopted the standards in 2010. Michigan has used the CCS to create our learning standards. Michigan's curriculum standards can be found on the [Michigan Academic Standards Page](#).

States also choose the standards that the teachers must meet (ECS, 1999). The state wants the teacher to be able to educate the students to achieve the set standards. There are things that every state requires, but each of them has their own variation. Every state requires the teacher to have a college degree and some form of standardized testing to be able to teach in their public school system. There are national tests available, but each state requires different ones. Teachers moving to a different state may be required to complete a new test or even a new course before gaining certification in that state.

States have the largest financial role in the schools. Very little funding comes from the federal government. Most of the federal funding is applied for by the individual school in the form of a grant for a special purpose (Federal Role, n.d.). The states provide teacher salaries and the money required to run each individual school. Schools may also have a Parent/Teacher Association which can help to raise additional funds for individual schools. (ECS, 1999).

Hierarchy Tiers on a District Level

- School Board
- Superintendent
- Principal
- Teacher

District

Each state is broken up into districts (ECS, 1999). Most administration deals on a small level, either within the district, or in the individual school (March, 1978). The districts each have their own school board made of elected members (Office of the Education Ombudsman, n.d.). Those boards decide how their schools will achieve the standards set by the state. They will also decide anything else they believe the schools should be doing to service their district's children. Some of these things

include overseeing the curriculum and helping to promote better teaching techniques (Education Administrators, n.d.). The board has to have all schools achieving at a level set by the state, so they use their resources to push the schools to achieve the standards they have set (ECS, 1999).

Superintendent

A superintendent is chosen to oversee the schools in the district (ECS, 1999). While the school board is elected by the community, the superintendent is hired by the school board. Anyone who meets the qualifications may apply. The school board conducts interviews and makes the decision on which individual to hire. Sometimes individuals from within the district are hired, and other times the individual hired comes from outside of the district. They are in charge of making sure the schools are doing what is required by the school board. They make routine visits to schools to check on how they are doing. They work with the principals and teachers to see that children are getting the most out of each school day.

Principal and Assistant Principal

The district hires principals to oversee each individual school. These principals are there to see that the teachers are doing their job and the children are getting the education they deserve (Office of the Education Ombudsman, n.d.). They are responsible for scheduling, planning the daily activities, and managing the overall activities of the school (Office of the Education Ombudsman, n.d.). Principals make routine visits to classrooms to make sure they are running smoothly and that teachers are making the most of their instructional time. Another difficult duty of the principal is the budget for the school. The principal must decide how to best spend the school's money (Education Administrators, n.d.).

The schools also have assistant principals. These administrators help the principal in the daily activities of the school. They also handle most of the discipline problems leaving the principal available to focus on other duties (Education Administrators, n.d.).

Teacher

Each school district is responsible for the hire of their teachers. In some districts there is a hiring committee formed to interview and recommend teachers to hire. In other districts the school board interviews and there are some districts where the individual school will conduct interviews and make a recommendation to the board.

The teacher is the one with the most direct affect on students. They ultimately decide what happens in the classrooms (ECS, 1999). When the door closes every morning it is up to the teacher to make an effective use of time and get children to those standards set by the state. If children in their classrooms are not performing well, the teacher is held responsible. It's vital that we hire individuals with the "right stuff" to make learning fun and a successful experience for children.

SUMMARY

In summary, the federal government makes general regulations for education and contributes very little funding for the schools (Federal Role, n.d.).

The states have most of the power because they are able to set the standards for teachers and students, and they fund the public school system almost completely (ECS, 1999).

The district has the power in the area entrusted to them by the state. Each district has an elected school board that determines how state standards are achieved and anything else they see fit to better the students' education (Office of the Education Ombudsman, n.d.).

The superintendent oversees the schools in the district and makes sure they are following what is set by the states and the district (ECS, 1999).

The principals manage their individual school with assistance from the assistant principal (Office of the Education Ombudsman, n.d.).

The teachers instruct the students in accordance with the standards set before them by all levels of the hierarchy.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Three People on the Margins

The First Person: In 1761 a six-year-old girl was captured from



West Africa, given the name Phillis Wheatley, and sold into slavery in the City of Boston. By the time she was 17, Phillis had taught herself to read and write and had developed a special love and talent for poetry. Her owner was a wealthy businessman and sought to improve his reputation by publishing an anthology of her poems. Unfortunately he encountered stiff resistance from publishers because few people at that time believed Africans to be capable of the thought and imagination needed to write poetry. People who heard of her poetry were skeptical and inclined to think that it was faked. Eventually, to save his own reputation, the owner assembled a tribunal of 18 prominent judges—including the governor of Massachusetts and John Hancock, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence—to assess the young woman's mental capacity. After cross-examining her, the judges finally

decided that Ms. Wheatley was, after all, capable of writing poetry (Robinson, 1982).

The Second Person: A century later, a child named Helen Keller lost her sight and hearing as a result of illness during infancy. In spite of this misfortune, though, Helen devised a language of gestural signs for communicating with a tutor, and was soon also using Braille to study both French and Latin. At ten she wrote and published a short story. Yet like Ms. Wheatley, Ms. Keller also faced substantial, chronic skepticism about her capacities. Prominent educators accused her of plagiarizing others' writings and merely "parroting" others' ideas without understanding them (Keller, 1954; Bogdan, 2006). Eventually, as with Wheatley, a panel was assembled—though this time the members were professional experts about disabilities—to determine whether Ms. Keller was in fact capable of writing what she published. The panel decided that was indeed capable, though only by a slim margin (five judges vs. four judges).

The Third Person: In 1978, Sue Rubin was born with a disability that limited her speech to disordered bursts of sound and occasionally echoing phrases of other people. She was labeled autistic because of her symptoms, and assumed to be profoundly retarded. With support and encouragement from her mother and others, however, Sue eventually learned to type on a keyboard without assistance. She learned to communicate effectively when she was about 13 and was able to go to school. Since then she has made many presentations about autism at conferences and recently co-edited a book about autism, titled *Autism: The Myth of the Person Alone* (Bogdan, et al., 2005).

One of these individuals experienced racial discrimination and the other two experienced physical disabilities, but notice something important: that all three were defined by society as disabled intellectually. Initially, their achievements were dismissed because of widespread assumptions—whether about race or disability—of their inherent incompetence. All three had to work harder than usual, not only to acquire literacy itself, but also to prove that their literacy was genuine and worthy of respect.

Since the time of Phillis Wheatley, North American society has eliminated slavery and made some progress at reducing certain forms of racism, though much remains to be done. In 1954, for example, the United States Supreme Court ruled that public schools could not be segregated by race, and in doing so recognized, at least legally, the moral obligation of society to provide all citizens with the best possible education. It has taken longer to recognize legally the rights and competence of persons with disabilities, but events and trends beginning in the 1970s have begun to make it happen. This chapter begins by explaining some of these and how they have altered the work of teachers.

Growing Support for People with Disabilities: Legislation and Its Effects

Since the 1970s political and social attitudes have moved increasingly toward including people with disabilities into a wide variety of "regular" activities. In the United States, the shift is illustrated clearly in the Federal legislation that was enacted during this time. The legislation partly stimulated the change in attitudes, but at the same time they partly resulted from the change. Three major laws were passed that guaranteed the rights of persons with disabilities, and of children and students with disabilities in particular. Although the first two affected teachers' work in the classroom, the third has had the biggest impact on education.

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504

This law—the first of its kind—required that individuals with disabilities be accommodated in any program or activity that receives Federal funding (PL 93-112, 1973). Although this law was not intended specifically for education, in practice it has protected students' rights in some extra-curricular activities (for older students) and in some child care or after-school care

programs (for younger students). If those programs receive Federal funding of any kind, the programs are not allowed to exclude children or youth with disabilities, and they have to find reasonable ways to accommodate the individuals' disabilities.

The definition of a disability under Section 504 is much broader than under another law providing special education services, "The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act." Therefore, many of our students may receive special services under the umbrella of Section 504. These students will be in general education classrooms and you will have to make the necessary accommodations for them.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (or ADA).

This legislation also prohibited discrimination on the basis of disability, just as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act had done (PL 101-336, 1990). Although the ADA also applies to all people (not just to students), its provisions are more specific and "stronger" than those of Section 504. In particular, ADA extends to all employment and jobs, not just those receiving Federal funding. It also specifically requires accommodations to be made in public facilities such as buses, restrooms, and telephones. ADA legislation is therefore responsible for some of the "minor" renovations in schools that you may have noticed, such as wheelchair-accessible doors, ramps, and restrooms, and public telephones with volume controls.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (or IDEA)

As its name implied, this legislation was more focused on education than either Section 504 or ADA. It was first passed in 1975 and has been amended several times since, including most recently in 2004 (PL 108-446, 2004). In its current form, the law guarantees the following rights related to education for anyone with a disability from birth to age 21. In Michigan, services are provided for individuals with disabilities until the age of 26.

- *Free, appropriate education:* An individual or an individual's family should not have to pay for education simply because the individual has a disability, and the educational program should be truly educational (i.e. not merely caretaking or "babysitting" of the person).
- *Due process:* In case of disagreements between an individual with a disability and the schools or other professionals, there must be procedures for resolving the disagreements that are fair and accessible to all parties—including the person himself or herself or the person's representative.
- *Fair evaluation of performance in spite of disability:* Tests or other evaluations should not assume test-taking skills that a person with a disability cannot reasonably be expected to have, such as holding a pencil, hearing or seeing questions, working quickly, or understanding and speaking orally. Evaluation procedures should be modified to allow for these differences. This provision of the law applies both to evaluations made by teachers and to school-wide or "high-stakes" testing programs.
- *Education in the "least restrictive environment":* Education for someone with a disability should provide as many educational opportunities and options for the person as possible, both in the short term and in the long term. In practice this requirement has meant including students in general education classrooms and school activities as much as possible, though often not totally.
- *An individualized educational program:* Given that every disability is unique, instructional planning for a person with a disability should be unique or individualized as well. In practice this provision has led to classroom teachers planning individualized programs jointly with other professionals (like reading specialists, psychologists, or medical personnel) as part of a team. Parents are also a part of this team, and when students are old enough, they can be a part of this process also. These plans, often referred to as an "IEP", are reviewed annually and revised. In some cases, these can be reviewed each semester, or as needed.

Considered together, these provisions are both a cause and an effect of basic democratic philosophy. The legislation says, in effect, that all individuals should have access to society in general and to education in particular. Although teachers certainly support this philosophy in broad terms, and many have welcomed the IDEA legislation, others have found the prospect of applying it in classrooms leads to a number of questions and concerns. Some ask, for example, whether a student with a disability will disrupt the class; others, whether the student will interfere with covering the curriculum; still others, whether the student might be teased by classmates. Since these are legitimate concerns, I will return to them at the end of this chapter. First, however, let me clarify exactly how the IDEA legislation affects the work of teachers, and then describe in more detail the major disabilities that you are likely to encounter in students.

Responsibilities of Teachers for Students with Disabilities

The IDEA legislation has affected the work of teachers by creating three new expectations. The first expectation is to provide alternative methods of assessment for students with disabilities. The second is to arrange a learning environment that is as normal or as “least restrictive” as possible, and the third is to participate in creating individual educational plans for students with disabilities.

Alternative Assessments

Assessments are used in education to determine the strengths of our students, and areas that need further development, and then use that information to plan educational experiences. In the context of students with disabilities, assessment refers to gathering information about a student in order both to identify the strengths of the student, and to decide what special educational support, if any, the student needs. In principle, of course, these are tasks that teachers have for all students: assessment is a major reason why we give tests and assignments, for example, and why we listen carefully to the quality of students’ comments during class discussions. For students with disabilities, however, such traditional or conventional strategies of assessment often seriously underestimate the students’ competence (Koretz & Barton, 2003/2004; Pullin, 2005). Depending on the disability, a student may have trouble with

1. holding a pencil,
2. hearing a question clearly,
3. focusing on a picture,
4. marking an answer in time even when he or she knows the answer,
5. concentrating on a task in the presence of other people, or
6. answering a question at the pace needed by the rest of the class.

There are many more concerns a student may have, but the point is that we will be dealing with a variety of needs among all of our students, whether they qualify for special education services or not. The challenge for teachers is meeting the wide variety of needs of our students. **ALL STUDENTS CAN LEARN!** What they learn, how they learn it, and the time it takes to learn it will vary among all of our students. Keep an open mind always and be willing to make any adaptations that will benefit students.

Traditionally, teachers have assumed that all students either have these skills or can learn them with just modest amounts of coaching, encouragement, and will power. For many other students, for example, it may be enough to say something like “Remember to listen to the question carefully!” For students with disabilities, however, a comment like this may not work and may even be insensitive. A student with visual impairment need not be reminded to “look at the page closely” or “at what I am writing on the board”; doing so will not cause the student to see the chalkboard more clearly—though the reminder might increase the student’s anxiety and self-consciousness.

We also hear teachers tell students to “try harder”, or to “do it again and this time concentrate or pay attention to your work” when they are not successful with a task, or when students ask a question. Please don’t do this! When students ask a question, are not successful with an assignment, or stop working, these are all indicators that they are struggling and need support. Whether they are general education students or students receiving special services, they need to have questions answered and guidance given. Simply telling them to “try again” or “try harder” is insulting and disrespectful. Responding in this way will quickly lead to students who may shut down and stop making attempts at their work. When this happens, we have more problems.

There are a number of strategies for modifying assessments in ways that attempt to be fair and that at the same time recognize how busy teachers usually are. One is to consider supplementing conventional assignments or tests with portfolios, which are collections of a student’s work that demonstrate a student’s development over time, and which usually include some sort of reflective or evaluative comments from the student, the teacher, or both (Carothers & Taylor, 2003; Wesson & King, 1996). Another is to devise a system for observing the student regularly, even if briefly, and informally recording notes about the observations for later consideration and assessment. A third strategy is to recruit help from teacher assistants, who are sometimes present to help a student with a disability; an assistant can often conduct a brief test or activity with the student, and later report on and discuss the results with you. Keep in mind that an assessment does not always mean a test. Projects and observation can also be powerful and effective assessments.

If you reflect on these strategies, you may realize that they may sometimes create issues about fairness. If a student with a disability demonstrates competence one way but other students demonstrate it another, should they be given similar credit? On the other hand, is it fair for one student to get a lower mark because the student lacks an ability—such as normal hearing—that teachers cannot, in principle, ever teach? These ethical issues are legitimate and important.

As educators, it is our responsibility to help ALL students learn. We know that every person learns differently, so why would we try to teach all students in the same way? It’s not possible. Therefore, we have to help students understand that “equal” and “fair” are two different ideas. In our classrooms, we cannot treat students equally and have each of them be successful. . We have to adapt to their learning needs. We will talk more about this later, but we have to talk with our students from the

very first day about the practices of the classroom. They have to understand there will be times when they will be doing things differently from their friends, or vice versa, and it's all in the name of learning; learning that meets their individual needs.

Least Restrictive Environment

The IDEA legislation calls for placing students with disabilities in the **least restrictive environment** (or **LRE**), defined as the combination of settings that involve the student with regular classrooms and school programs as much as possible. The precise combination is determined by the circumstances of a particular school and of the student. A kindergarten child with a mild cognitive disability, for example, may spend the majority of time in the regular kindergarten, working alongside and playing with non-disabled classmates and relying on a teacher assistant for help where needed. An individual with a similar disability in high school, however, might be assigned primarily to classes specially intended for their need, but nonetheless participate in some school wide activities alongside non-disabled students. The difference in LREs might reflect teachers' perceptions of how difficult it is to modify the curriculum in each case; rightly or wrongly, teachers are apt to regard adaptation as more challenging at "higher" grade levels. By the same token, a student with a disability that is strictly physical might spend virtually all his or her time in regular classes throughout the student's school career. In this case, adjustment of the curriculum would not be an issue.

For you, the policy favoring the least restrictive environment means that if you continue teaching long enough, you will very likely encounter a student with a disability in one or more of your classes, or at least have one in a school-related activity for which you are responsible. It also means that the special educational needs of these students will most often be the "mildest." Statistically, the most frequent forms of special needs are learning disabilities, which are impairments in specific aspects of learning, and especially of reading. Learning disabilities account for about half of all special educational needs—as much as all other types put together. Somewhat less common are speech and language disorders, cognitive disabilities, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorders (abbreviated *ADHD*). Because of their frequency and of the likelihood that you will meet students for whom these labels have been considered, I describe them more fully later in this chapter, along with other disability conditions that you will encounter much less frequently.

Individual Educational Plan

The third way that IDEA legislation and current educational approaches affect teachers is by requiring teachers and other professional staff to develop an annual **individual educational plan** (or **IEP**) for each student with a disability. The plan is created by a team of individuals who know the student's strengths and needs; at a minimum it includes one or more classroom teachers, a "resource" or special education teacher, and the student's parents or guardians. Sometimes, too, the team includes a school administrator (like a vice-principal) or other professionals from outside the school (like a psychologist or physician), depending on the nature of the child's disability. An IEP can take many forms, but it always describes a student's current social and academic strengths as well as the student's social or academic needs. It also specifies educational goals or objectives for the coming year, lists special services to be provided, and describes how progress toward the goals will be assessed at the end of year. IEPs originally served mainly students in the younger grades, but more recently they have been extended and modified to serve transition planning for adolescents with disabilities who are approaching the end of their public schooling (West, et al., 1999). For these students, the goals of the plan often include activities (like finding employment) to extend beyond schooling as such.

If you have a student with an IEP, you can expect two consequences for teaching. The first is that you should expect to make definite, clear plans for the student, and to put the plans in writing. This consequence does not, of course, prevent you from taking advantage of unexpected or spontaneous classroom events as well in order to enrich the curriculum. But it does mean that an educational program for a student with a disability cannot consist only of the unexpected or spontaneous. The second consequence is that you should not expect to construct an educational plan alone, as it is commonly done when planning regular classroom programs. When it comes to students with disabilities, expect instead to plan as part of a team. Working with others ensures that everyone who is concerned about the student has a voice. It also makes it possible to improve the quality of IEPs by pooling ideas from many sources—even if, as you might suspect, it also can challenge professionals to communicate clearly and cooperate respectfully with team members in order to serve a student as well as possible.

ETHICS AND LAW

Let's examine some of the rights guaranteed to all Americans and how those rights change once they enter school. We will also answer some of the most common questions held by students. What is free speech? Is it protected in school? How safe am I in my possessions? Do I have any expectation of privacy when it comes to my things? A good understanding of students'

rights benefits everyone: the students who exercise them, the teachers who challenge them, and the democratic society which lives by them. Lawsuits have become increasingly common in our society and many Americans act and speak out of the fear of being taken to court. In any environment, one must be conscious of how their words and actions will affect others. A thoughtless statement or inappropriate physical contact might land you in court. This is especially true in schools, where daily contact, high emotions and stressful circumstances can all come together at the wrong moment. As such, it is good to understand the rights of students trying to express themselves and the rights of teachers trying to keep a safe, orderly learning environment. Few people know their constitutional rights, and even fewer teachers & students know how their constitutional rights change once they enter the 'semi-public/semi-private' classroom.

STUDENTS RIGHTS

The founding fathers deliberated for days on end when writing the first draft of our nation's Constitution and later the Bill of Rights. They agonized over wording; argued over semantics. It is likely they had no idea just how successful this "great experiment in democracy" would turn out to be. Equally likely is this: they never once considered how these rights would pertain to young students in the classroom. The landmark case of [Tinker v. Des Moines School District](#) clearly defined the benchmark for how rights may be exercised and when they may be curtailed:

"It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.... On the other hand, the Court has repeatedly emphasized the need for affirming the comprehensive authority of the States and of school officials, consistent with fundamental constitutional safeguards, to prescribe and control conduct in the schools.

... Our problem lies in the area where students in the exercise of [their] rights collide with the rules of the school authorities."

Constitutional Topic: Student Rights

In other words, one doesn't surrender his or her constitutional rights by attending school. However the courts have recognized that the unique nature of the school environment requires that certain liberties be suppressed in

the interest of maintaining a safe, orderly learning environment. According to the doctrine of "in loco parentis" school officials are more than government officials; they are, in a legal sense, the temporary parents of their students. Just what exactly that allows them to do and say is a matter of debate and has led to numerous legal challenges, many involving the Supreme Court.

THE 1ST AMENDMENT

Freedom of Speech, Expression & Religion

Perhaps the most quoted court decision on the subject, [Tinker v. Des Moines](#) was a battle over students' 1st amendment rights, specifically the right to free speech. High school students John Tinker, 15, and Christopher Eckhardt, 16, decided to show their opposition to the Vietnam War by wearing black armbands to school. Administrators countered by banning armbands and threatened disciplinary actions for any students violating the rule. Tinker and Eckhardt wore their armbands and were suspended, not allowed back until they agreed to stop violating school rules. Tinker's father subsequently sued and lost in District Court. The Appellate Court was unable to reach a decision and the case was passed up to the Supreme Court, who overturned the District Court's decision and ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. The court stated that if the student's actions did not disrupt the learning environment, or advocate or cause harm to themselves or others, it was permissible. This has been the rationale in virtually every other opinion held by the court regarding student's constitutional rights. [Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District](#), 393 U.S. 503 (1969)

While a student's right to free speech is protected, it is not a blanket protection covering any form of protest. A recent example of this is [Morse v. Frederick](#), also known as the "Bong Hits 4 Jesus" case. [Morse v. Frederick](#), 127 S. Ct. 2618 (2007) This case is particularly eye-opening in that the offense occurred off school grounds. Frederick, a high school student, displayed a banner at a local parade featuring the phrase "Bong Hits 4 Jesus," a reference to marijuana use. Morse, a school official, noticed the banner and instructed the student to take it down. When Frederick refused, he was suspended by Morse and the decision was upheld by the school board. Frederick sued, claiming protection under his 1st amendment rights. This time the Supreme Court sided with the school board, noting " ... schools may take steps to safeguard those entrusted to their care from speech that can reasonably be regarded as encouraging illegal drug use, [therefore] the school officials in this case did not violate the First Amendment..." This fits with the consistent message of the courts – a student's Constitutional rights will be protected only as long as their exercise does not endanger the health or academic progress of others.

Other cases regarding the Rights of Free Speech & Expression:

[West Virginia v. Barnette](#), 1943 – The court ruled that is unconstitutional to require students to salute the American flag. The 1st amendment not only protects freedom "of" expression but also freedom "from" expression. [West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette](#), 319 U.S. 624 (1943)

Bethel School District v. Fraser, 1986 – Washington high school student Matthew Fraser was suspended for using sexually explicit language in a speech given on school grounds. The court sided with the school, affirming that schools can prohibit “lewd, indecent or plainly offensive” language. *Bethel School District No. 403 v. Fraser*, 478 U.S. 675 (1986)

Guiles v. Marineau, 2004 – A 14-year old student in Vermont was suspended for repeatedly wearing a T-shirt depicting President George W Bush as an alcoholic and a cocaine addict. The shirt contained both written and visual depictions of banned substances. The court sided with the student, citing two factors: 1) the shirt did not advocate the use of illegal drugs and 2) the shirt did not cause significant disruptions to the learning environment. *Guiles v. Marineau*, 461 F.3d 320, 324-25 (2d. Cir. 2006)

Summary – A student’s exercise of speech or expression is legal and constitutionally protected so long as it doesn’t:

1. endanger the public
2. disrupt the learning environment
3. advocate the use of illegal substances or other violations of the law

4TH AMENDMENT

Unreasonable Search & Seizure

The student’s desire for freedom of speech can only be matched by their desire for privacy and for security of their possessions. The right of school officials to search a student’s belongings is a contentious issue, and few teachers know the limits of their authority and few students understand the extent of their rights. Just as *Tinker v. Des Moines* set the standard for the protection of 1st Amendment rights, so did another case set the precedent for search & seizure: *New Jersey v. T. L. O.*, 469 U.S. 325 (1985).

Two female high school students were caught smoking in the restroom and assistant principal Theodore Choplick confronted them. One of the two admitted her wrongdoing but the other student (T.L.O.) denied it. Choplick searched T.L.O.’s purse and discovered cigarettes, drugs and drug paraphernalia, along with a large amount of money. T.L.O. was tried and convicted in court on charges of delinquency. The student countered that the school had violated her 4th amendment rights, depriving her of protection against unreasonable search and seizure (i.e. searching without a warrant) and the evidence should be inadmissible. The Supreme Court disagreed, stating: “a school official may properly conduct a search of a student’s person if the official has a reasonable suspicion that a crime has been or is in the process of being committed, or reasonable cause to believe that the search is necessary to maintain school discipline or enforce school policies.”

This is a departure from the court’s usual position requiring “probable cause” for government officials to search someone without a warrant. This change, although appearing slight, has enormous ramifications. School officials may search someone based solely upon a well-grounded suspicion, not iron-clad evidence of wrongdoing. This is analogous to the difference between “reasonable doubt” and “beyond a shadow of a doubt.” This threshold however applies only to school personnel and NOT to law enforcement officials on school grounds. The court has been careful not to slide down that slippery slope. In the court’s decision, they state that a teacher’s right to protect him- or herself and the safety of their students is on par with the rights of firefighters, EMS, OSHA officials, etc. The right to privacy must be balanced against the public’s right to safety. In a school, the balance is tilted toward protecting safety and maintaining order, even if it is at the expense of student rights.

The issue of locker searches has not come to the Supreme Court. As the locker is school property and therefore “public space” it is not afforded the same protections as a student’s personal possessions.

State of Iowa v. Marzel Jones (2003) – A student whose locker was cleaned out by school personnel. Finding a small amount of marijuana, the student was charged. Marzel claimed 4th amendment protection against unreasonable search & seizure but was denied by the State Supreme Court who “noted that the search occurred on school grounds, ‘where the State is responsible for maintaining discipline, health, and safety.’ (Bd. of Ed. of Indep. Sch. Dist. 92 v. Earls, 536 U.S. 822)”. *State of Iowa vs. Marzel Jones*, Appellee 02-505 (2003).

Another issue of concern has been the constitutionality of drug screenings for student-athletes.

Vernonia School District v. Acton (1995) – 7th grade Oregon student James Acton signed up to play football but refused to take a mandatory urine test. Drug testing was administered to athletes after a recent ‘explosion’ in drug-use and the related discipline problems which arose. Citing public health concerns and noting the prevalence of student-athletes involved in drug-related incidents, the school board deemed urinalysis a necessary requirement for participation in sports. The Supreme Court agreed and upheld their decision. Once again, the desire to protect public health overrode student’s desire for privacy. *Vernonia School District 47J v. Acton*, 515 U.S. 646 (1995)

Summary – School personnel may search a student and their belongings if the health & welfare of the public is at risk or they have a ‘reasonable suspicion’ that a crime has been, is being, or will be committed

5TH & 14TH AMENDMENT

The Right to Due Process

These amendments protect an individual's right to a fair trial and must be considered whenever "a person's good name, reputation, honor, or integrity is at stake because of what the government is doing to him..." [Wisconsin v. Constantineau, 400 U.S. 433 \(1971\)](#)

1). This includes the enforcement of disciplinary actions such as suspension or expulsion. The expectations of a fair trial are very different however, depending on the circumstances. Disciplinary expulsion is treated differently than an 'academic dismissal.' Claire La Roche makes the point by citing *Barnard v. Inhabitants of Shelburne*: "Misconduct is a very different matter from failure to attain a standard of excellence in studies.... A public hearing may be regarded as helpful to the ascertainment of misconduct and useless or harmful in finding out the truth as to scholarship." (emphasis added)

According to La Roche's interpretation of the courts, the following are necessary in the expulsion of a student on disciplinary grounds:

1. a timely & formal hearing
2. a detailed explanation of the charges
3. a strict adherence to the schools stated policy
4. a 'punishment that fits the crime'

She goes on: "To ensure fundamental fairness, decisions must be based on the facts and supported by the evidence. Moreover, punishment should be commensurate with the severity of the offense. Consequently, it is important for schools to establish guidelines and be consistent with sanctions."

OTHER MISCELLANEOUS CASES

The following are other judgments handed down by the Supreme Court:

School uniforms and dress codes are intended to stop disruptions to the learning process by banning lewd, obscene or offensive clothing. As such, the courts have ruled them constitutional despite students pleading for "the freedom of expression" and the lesser-known "freedom to see skin."

Corporal punishment (physically disciplining a student) barely passed a constitutional challenge in 1977 with a divided court ruling 5-4 that it is neither "cruel and unusual punishment" nor a denial of due process. ([Ingraham v. Wright](#), 430 U.S. 651 [1977]) While corporal punishment is not allowed in Michigan, there are states where it is still legal.

The **copyright** of school newspapers was upheld with the understanding that the school is not a "forum of public expression." Further, the justices declared that a school "need not tolerate student speech that is inconsistent with its basic educational mission." ([Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier](#) , 484 U.S. 260 [1988]).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Pickering vs. Board of Education

A court case in which a teacher criticized the school board's financial policies and was fired. He took the case to the Supreme Court and won. Teachers are guaranteed the right to express their opinions and beliefs under the First Amendment, as long as they do not disrupt the business of the school and the learning environment.

Copyright Laws

- Protects the intellectual property of authors
- Must receive permission from author to reproduce materials
- Many items on the internet are also copyrighted
- Some authors give permission for copying to teachers for use in their classroom

Fair Use Guidelines

- Policies which specify limited use of copyright materials for educational purposes
- Can make one copy for planning purposes
- Can make copies for one time use in class
- Pages from consumable materials may not be copied
- Cannot create a collection of works
- Cannot charge students

Religion and the Law

- Prayer, or other religious activities, cannot be initiated by the school or teacher
- Prayer and other religious activities are permitted if initiated by students
- Schools must give religious organizations the same access to facilities as they give other secular organizations
- Prayer permitted in school if initiated by students, and does not interfere with the functioning of the school; all students not required to participate
- Schools cannot teach a particular religion, but may teach the history of religion, comparative religions, or the role of religion in the history of the United States or other countries
- No religious symbols permitted

Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color or national origin.

Title IX prohibits discrimination based on gender.

Family Education Right and Privacy Act (FERPA): makes school records open to parents and students; must inform parents of their rights regarding records; must provide access; must create procedures for allowing students and parents to challenge and/or amend information believed to be inaccurate; protects against disclosure of confidential information to third parties without consent.

Individuals with Disabilities Act guarantees access to education for all children with special needs; must receive education in the least restrictive environment; must have access to special services and accommodations; requires the use of an **Individualized Education Plan (IEP)** which is formed with input from parents, classroom teachers, special education teachers, social work, principal and other designated individuals.

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CHAPTER 3

Philosophies and Theories in Education

What makes a teacher? Teaching is like a salad. Think about it. If you were to attend a party for any given holiday, the number of and variations to each salad recipe that might be present for consumption could outnumber those present at the party. There are so many different ways to teach, varying circumstances to take into account, and philosophies to apply to each classroom. And what better way to have a positive impact on the world than to offer knowledge for consumption? The term 'teacher' can be applied to anyone who imparts knowledge of any topic, but it is generally more focused on those who are hired to do so (teach, n.d., n.p.). In imparting knowledge to our students, it is inevitable that we must take into account our own personal philosophies, or pedagogies, and determine not only how we decide what our philosophies are, but also how those impact our consumers.

LESSONS IN PEDAGOGY

What, exactly, are education philosophies? According to Thelma Roberson (2000), most prospective teachers confuse their beliefs with the ideas of teaching (p. 6). Education philosophies, then, are not what you want to do in class to aid learning, but why you do them and how they work. For example, Roberson's students state they "want to use cooperative learning techniques" in their classroom. The question posed is, why? "[I]s cooperative learning a true philosophy or is it something you do in the classroom because of your belief about the way children learn?" (Roberson, 2000, p. 6). Philosophies need to translate ideas into action – if you want to use certain techniques, then you need to understand how they are effective in the classroom to create that portion of your education philosophy. It helps to have an overview of the various schools out there.

- Perennialism – Focuses on human concerns that have caused concern for centuries, revealed through 'great works' (Ornstein, 2003, p. 110) It focuses on great works of art, literature and enduring ideas.
- Essentialism – Emphasizes skills and subjects that are needed by all in a productive society. This is the belief in "Back to Basics". Rote learning is emphasized and
- Progressivism – Instruction features problem solving and group activities – The instructor acts as a facilitator as opposed to a leader (Ornstein, 2003, p. 110)
- Social Reconstructionism – Instruction that focuses on significant social and economic problems in an effort to solve them (Ornstein, 2003, pg.110)
- Existentialism – Classroom dialogue stimulates awareness – each person creates an awareness gleaned from discussion and encourages deep personal reflection on his or her convictions (Ornstein, 2003, p. 108).

Perennialism

- Knowledge that has been passed through the ages should be continued as the basis of the curriculum, like the classic works of Plato and Einstein.
- Reason, logic, and analytical thought are valued and encouraged
- Only information that stood the test of time is relevant. It is believed these prepare students for life and help to develop rational thinking.
- The classes most likely to be considered under this approach would be history, science, math, and religion classes (Educational Philosophies in the Classroom, pg.1).

Essentialism

- Essentialists believe that there is a universal pool of knowledge needed by all students.
- The fundamentals of teaching are the basis of the curriculum: math, science, history, foreign language, and English. Vocational classes are not seen as a necessary part of educational training.

- Classrooms are formal, teacher-centered, and students are passive learners.
- Evaluations are predominately through testing, and there are few, if any, projects or portfolios.

Progressivism

- This is a student-centered form of instruction where students follow the scientific method of questioning and searching for the answer.
- Evaluations include projects and portfolios.
- Current events are used to keep students interested in the required subject matter.
- Students are active learners as opposed to passive learners.
- The teacher is a facilitator rather than the center of the educational process.
- Student input is encouraged, and students are asked to find their interpretation of the answer, have a choice in projects and assignments. (Educational Philosophies in the classroom, pg.1).
- Real world problem solving emphasized.
- Subjects are integrated.
- Interaction among students.
- Students have a voice in the classroom.



Social Reconstructivism

- This student-centered philosophy strives to instill a desire to make the world a better place.
- It places a focus on controversial world issues and uses current events as a springboard for the thinking process.
- These students are taught the importance of working together to bring about change.
- These teachers incorporate what is happening in the world with what they are learning in the classroom (Educational Philosophies in the Classroom, pg.1).

ADDITIONAL BELIEFS IN REGARDS TO TEACHING/LEARNING

Constructivism

Active participation is the key to this teaching style. Students are free to explore their own ideas and share concepts with one another in nontraditional ways. "Hands on activity [...] is the most effective way of learning and is considered true learning" (Educational Philosophies in the Classroom, pg.1).

What is Constructivism?

The root word of *Constructivism* is "construct." Basically, Constructivism is the theory that knowledge must be constructed by a person, not just transmitted to the person. People construct knowledge by taking new information and integrating it with their own pre-existing knowledge (Cooper, 2007; Woolfolk, 2007). It means they are actively involved in seeking out information, creating projects, and working with material being presented versus just sitting and listening to someone "talk at them".

Jean Piaget's Theory of Constructivism

Jean Piaget was one of the major constructivists in past history. His theory looks at how people construct knowledge cognitively. In Piaget's theory, everybody has *schematas*. These are the categories of information we create to organize

information we take in. For example, “food” is one schema we may have. We have a variety of information on food. It can be organized into different food groups such as the following: bread/ pastas, fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy, and sweets (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2007). We use these schematas to help us “make sense” of what we see, hear and experience, and integrate this information into our knowledge bank.

According to Piaget’s theory, one way people construct knowledge is through *assimilation*. People assimilate when they incorporate new knowledge and information into pre-existing schemes. Here is an example: A child sees a car and learns that it can be called a vehicle. Then the child sees a motorcycle and learns that it can be called a vehicle as well. Then the child sees a truck and calls it a vehicle. Basically, the child developed a schema for “vehicles” and incorporated trucks into that schema (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2007).

Another way people construct knowledge, according to Piaget’s theory, is through *accommodation*. People accommodate when they modify or change their pre-existing schemes. Here is an example.: A child sees a dog (a furry four-legged animal) and learns that it can be called a pet. Then the child sees a cat (a furry four-legged animal) and learns that it can be called a pet as well. Then the child sees a raccoon (also a furry four-legged animal) and calls it a pet. Afterwards, the child learns from his or her parents that a raccoon is not a pet. At first, the child develops a schemea for “pet” which includes all furry four-legged animals. Then the child learns that not all furry four-legged animals are pets. Because of this, the child needs to accommodate his or her schema for “pet.” According to Piaget, people learn through a balance of assimilation and accommodation (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2007).



Lev Vygotsky's Theory of Constructivism

Lev Vygotsky was another major constructivist in past history. While Jean Piaget’s theory is a cognitive perspective, Vygotsky’s theory is a sociocultural perspective. His theory looks at how people construct knowledge by collaborating with others. In Vygotsky’s theory, people learn and construct knowledge within the *Zone of Proximal Development*. People have an independent level of performance where they can do things independently. Likewise, people have a frustration level where tasks are too difficult to be able to perform on their own. In between there is an instructional level where they can do things above the independent level with the help and guidance of others. The range, or zone, between the independent and frustration levels is the Zone of Proximal Development (Cooper, 2007; Kail & Cavanaugh, 2007; Woolfolk, 2007).

In the Zone of Proximal Development, assistance needs to be given by another person. This assistance, help, or guidance is known as *scaffolding*. Because the zone has a range, assistance needs to be given, but not too much. If not enough assistance is given, a person may not be able to learn the task. On the other hand, if too much assistance is given, the person may not be able to fully construct the new acquired information into knowledge. For example, a child needs help doing math homework. With no help, the child may not be able to do it. With too much help, the homework is done for the child, so the child may not fully understand the math homework anyway (Cooper, 2007; Kail & Cavanaugh, 2007; Woolfolk, 2007).

Constructivism in the Classroom

In the classroom, the teacher can use Constructivism to help teach the students. The teacher can base the instruction on the cognitive strategies, experiences, and culture of the students. The teacher can make the instruction interesting by correlating it with real life applications, especially applications within the students’ own communities. Students can work and collaborate together during particular activities. The teacher can provide feedback for the students so they know what they can do independently and know what they need help with. New concepts can be related to the students’ prior knowledge. The teacher can also explain how new concepts can be used in different contexts and subjects. All these ideas are based on Constructivism (Sherman & Kurshan, 2005).

Research shows that constructivistic teaching can be effective. According to research conducted by Jong Suk Kim at Chungnum National University in Korea, constructivistic teaching is more effective than traditional teaching when looking at the students’ academic achievement. The research also shows that students have some preference for constructivistic teaching (Kim, 2005). Again, when the theory of Constructivism is actually applied in the classroom, it can be effective for teaching students.

It is not the sole responsibility of the teachers to educate the students. According to Constructivism, students have some

responsibilities when learning. A student may be quick to blame the teacher for not understanding the material, but it could be the case that the student is not doing everything he or she could be doing. Because knowledge is constructed, not transmitted, students need to make an effort to assimilate, accommodate, and make sense of information. They also need to make an effort to collaborate with others, especially if they are having a hard time understanding the information.

Four Philosophies in Assessment

In addition, the 'constructivist' school of philosophy, rooted in the Pragmatic pedagogy and branched off from the 'Social Reconstructivist' school, has gained much popularity. Around the turn of the century (early 1990s), many teachers felt the rote memorization and mindless routine that was common then was ineffective, and began to look for alternate ways to reach their students (Ornstein, 2003, p. 111). Through the constructivist approach, "students 'construct' knowledge through an interaction between what they already think and know and with new ideas and experiences" (Roberson, 2000, p. 8). This is an active learning process that leads to deeper understanding of the concepts presented in class, and is based on the abilities and readiness of the children rather than set curriculum guidelines (Ornstein, 2003, p. 112). Constructivism "emphasizes socially interactive and process-oriented 'hands on' learning in which students work collaboratively to expand and revise their knowledge base" (Ornstein, 2003, p. 112). Essentially, knowledge which is shaped by experience is reconstructed, or altered, to assist the student in understanding new concepts (Ornstein, 2003, p. 112). You, as the teacher, help the students build the scaffolding they need to maintain the information even after the test is taken and graded.

Conclusion

You are ready to graze at a Fourth of July picnic. You walk over to the table, and you see an array of salads ready for you to dive in to them. How do you pick which ones you want to sample now or save for later? How do you narrow the choices down?

Most educators do not follow just one philosophy. We use pieces from several and roll them all into one. For example, I do believe there is a core set of knowledge that all humans must have, (Essentialism), but I believe it can be taught in ways that have students actively involved in making decisions, creating activities and using a variety of techniques. (Progressivism). I believe we build, or construct, our own knowledge and this is why students are engaged in learning activities, and with each other, versus just listening to me stand in front of a class and talk.

You also will find the pieces that these philosophies that you believe in and will weave them into your own philosophy. It will grow and change throughout your career. I do not believe some of the things I believed 35 years ago when I first began teaching. Just as your classroom will change every year, continue to alter your philosophies. See what works for you and your students on a collaborative level.

Creating Your Philosophy

As I said, you will choose elements from various philosophies and roll them all into your own. Here are things to consider:

- What is the purpose of education?
- What do you believe should be taught?
- How do you think curriculum should be taught?
- What is your role as the teacher?
- What is the role of the student?
- What is the value of teacher-centered instruction and student-centered instruction; where and when do you incorporate each?

These are few ideas for you to begin to think about as you work to develop your own philosophy of education.

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CHAPTER 4

Students

We have all spent time as students, and our teachers had their opinions of us. Some of those opinions may have been based in fact and some of them may have been based in their own prejudice and bias. As an educator, you have to practice what I call, “RAT”; Respect, Acceptance and Tolerance. We have to accept students for who they are, where they come from, and the circumstances of their life. We have to keep our personal bias and prejudice out of the classroom. If we do not we will, even if we don’t realize it, treat them in a way that may have a negative impact on the learning environment and their learning.

It is known that in order to learn, we have to take a risk. You are all taking a risk by enrolling in this class. According to Erikson’s “Stages of Social Development,” if the circumstances were positive, we developed a sense of autonomy during our toddler years. Autonomy is the feeling/belief that we can do things, we can take care of ourselves, and we can do for ourselves. The next stage which we enter around 3 is where we develop initiative. We try new things, we explore, and experiment. It is during both of these stages that we take many risks. These two things are major foundations for the learning process.

In order for us to feel confident and secure in taking risks, we have to feel safe. We have to be both physically and psychologically safe. Our students have to be relatively sure that their physical being is not in danger. Equally important is being psychologically safe. Students have to feel they will not be laughed at, made fun of, ridiculed or humiliated for their learning endeavors. Do you remember teachers who used some of these techniques in their teaching or allowed classmates to engage in these behaviors? If you look at Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Needs,” you will see that safety needs are the next level above basic food and shelter. It is up to us to make certain that we create this type of environment for our students. As a student, if you do not feel psychologically safe, you will eventually stop engaging in learning activities because it is “safer” that way, especially if you are student who struggles with academic endeavors. When this happens, learning fails to take place.

A major factor in feeling safe, and being willing to take risks lies in the relationship between teacher and student. Teachers have to work to develop a respectful, trusting relationship with students. The lack of this relationship is the cause of many difficulties in the classroom between teacher and student, as well as the lack of motivation and willingness to take learning risks. I can’t stress hard enough how important it is to respect your students, and develop a respectful relationship! Too many students are not spoken to in a respectful tone, and they are not treated in a respectful manner. I have been in countless classrooms and I listened to the way teachers have talked to students and I knew immediately why there are discipline issues; it’s because students were reacting to the way they were treated. We can’t expect them to cooperate, be kind to others, complete requests we make, and treat adults with respect if the adults in the room are not treating students the same way. I would hope you don’t go into the classroom with the “I’m the boss” attitude, and “You will do as I say”, because it will cause you some issues, I promise.

Part of treating students respectfully is listening to their ideas, concerns, and thoughts and being willing to compromise with them. Everything doesn’t always have to be done your way; sometimes they have better ideas. If you are willing to listen and make compromises, or change your ways based on what students say, you will find they will respect you and will be more productive members of the classroom.

Our goal is to share power with students. If we share power, we will create more self-sufficient, responsible students and we will discover there are less behavior problem to deal with. Children in the school age years have a great need to be productive, as well as have control over themselves and their world. Sharing control in the classroom fulfills this developmental need, and again, will help our classrooms run more productively. It also connects them to each other in many ways, and feeling connected is one of the pillars of a successful learning environment.

While human growth and development follows predictable patterns and stages, every human goes through the stages at a different rate. We may have a room full of eighth graders who are in various levels of development. This is particularly challenging for teachers in the elementary years. When I taught kindergarten, it was not uncommon for me to have children in three different levels of cognitive development and all in different places within those three levels. It’s important that we know the characteristics of each cognitive and social stage. It is only with this knowledge that we can truly understand our students and provide the best possible learning environment for them. Be sure to include a growth and development class in your education studies!

Our current knowledge on a subject forms the base for future learning. As educators, we take students where they are at and build on their current knowledge. When you are working with students, I want you to keep this idea of building on strengths and knowledge in mind. In education, we tend to look at areas a student is deficient in and try to “catch them up” or “bring them up to speed.” I would challenge you not to look at the weaknesses a student has; look at the strengths and build from there. The change of perspective will change

what you do with the student and it will make a difference in how the student perceives themselves. If they have a more positive perception of their skills and abilities, you will find they are more willing to take risks. For example if we tell a student, "Your paragraphing skills are poor and we need to work on improving them", we start the conversation with a negative and the student feels inadequate and this impacts self-esteem, and confidence, as well as motivation. However, if we tell the same student, "Your writing contains new insights and ideas that are not often considered by others. One way we can improve on the understanding of those ideas, however, is to work on improving your paragraphing skills. We can work on that together". You have now set a more positive tone and greater confidence in the student. Try not to get into the mindset of trying to "fix"



what's not working and work from the idea of "This is where the student is strong, and this is where I want to take them." It will make a big difference in the student's willingness to work hard, and in their success.

While our students will be at different levels of learning, they will have different learning needs and possess a variety of learning styles as well. They will also differ in many other ways. A few of these are:

- Gender
- Family Structure
- Family's beliefs on education
- How family values education
- Socioeconomic Status
- Culture
- Language
- Background Knowledge/Experience
- Religion
- Students receiving Special Education Services
- Students who are working above grade level in one or more area

One thing I want to caution you on is getting "wrapped up" in the bias and prejudices associated with these. If you do, you will not provide the best possible learning environment for students. Many times we have to really keep ourselves in check because these things have a way of creeping in and before we know it, they are influencing our practices. I also encourage you not to get involved in the teacher's lounge discussions about children. It is one thing to make a statement about a student such as, "I have a student who is struggling with some of the classroom expectations. He has a difficult time keeping quiet while I am talking. Does anyone have a strategy I could try because what I have done is not working" and making a statement such as, "Max is making me nuts! He can't keep quiet during instruction and every day it's a battle. I am happy on the days he isn't here!" The first statement keeps the child's identity confidential and is seeking support. The second statement ridicules the student and makes his identity known to all. Teachers in grades ahead will be dreading Max because they know he is a problem. It also disrespectful and breaches confidentiality. Be respectful of your students, even in the teacher's lounge and don't get caught up in some of the negative talk that can take place.

Our classrooms will be very diverse in many ways, but one thing is almost certain, you will have students in your class who are receiving special education services. Prior to 1975, special education students were segregated into their own classrooms, or not even included in our neighborhood schools. In 1975, Public Law 94-142 created provisions for special needs students to be included into our schools. In 1990, it was amended and re-named the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act." (IDEA) The law mandates that services be provided for students. Review the information on IDEA in the chapter, "School Laws and Organization".

You may also have students in your classroom who are working above grade level in one subject area or more. The student who falls into this category, and is not challenged and given work at his/her level, may become a discipline problem in the classroom. Children who are bored quite often find themselves "getting into trouble." Watch your students carefully. When you have children you know need an additional challenge, work with parents and other

professionals to provide the necessary experiences for them. You will add to their knowledge and skill base and you will also prevent classroom disruptions. We will look at these ideas more in-depth in coming weeks.



For many generations, we viewed intelligence as one dimensional. In 1983, Howard Gardner shattered this belief with his "Multiple Intelligences Theory." He stated it is not a matter of "how smart" we are, but "how we are smart." He viewed intelligence as the "ability to process information and produce ideas and products that contribute to society." He proposed that instead of there being one "thing" known as intelligence, we actually possess several intelligences. There are nine currently outlined, and he acknowledged there were probably more that are unidentified. His theory states that we develop all of these enough to "get by" and some of them we will excel in.

The intelligences he outlined are:

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences

1. Verbal-linguistic intelligence (well-developed verbal skills and sensitivity to the sounds, meanings and rhythms of words)
2. Logical-mathematical intelligence (ability to think conceptually and abstractly, and capacity to discern logical and numerical patterns)
3. Spatial-visual intelligence (capacity to think in images and pictures, to visualize accurately and abstractly)
4. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (ability to control one's body movements and to handle objects skillfully)
5. Musical intelligences (ability to produce and appreciate rhythm, pitch and timber)
6. Interpersonal intelligence (capacity to detect and respond appropriately to the moods, motivations and desires of others)
7. Intrapersonal (capacity to be self-aware and in tune with inner feelings, values, beliefs and thinking processes)
8. Naturalist intelligence (ability to recognize and categorize plants, animals and other objects in nature)
9. Existential intelligence (sensitivity and capacity to tackle deep questions about human existence such as, What is the meaning of life? Why do we die? How did we get here?)
(Source: Thirteen ed online, 2004) Retrieved July 10, 2018
from https://www.niu.edu/facdev/_pdf/guide/learning/howard_gardner_theory_multiple_intelligences.pdf

For more information, check out [Howard Gardner's website](#)

The MI Theory had a major impact on education. It has been found that those intelligences we excel in are linked to our learning style. (Learning style is your preferred way to take in and process information.) Let's look at a comparison. You have been given the task of putting together a desk. If "Verbal-Linguistic" is one of your higher intelligences, you need directions written out in word form, step by step. However, the person who has a high "Spatial" intelligence will benefit from picture directions. It's not that either person isn't "smart enough" to put the desk together, it's that we each have one way that works better for us.

As an educator, we need to be aware of our students' intelligences. If we know this, we can provide instruction that covers a variety of intelligences. This will help students learn the material in the way that benefits them the most. Let's look at a very basic skill: learning colors. As a kindergarten teacher, colors were a concept I presented to my students. Using the color green, for example, I would design several learning activities centered on this color. Here are some examples:

- Painting with green; possibly a second station with blue and yellow so they can mix and make green
- Sorting green objects by a specific characteristic (Big or small)
- Learning a song about green
- Green play dough with utensils
- A strip of sod in the sensory table with scissors to cut the grass
- Green foods for snack

For a child who has a strong musical intelligence, the concept of green may become solidified with the song; a child who is strong in bodily-kinesthetic may have this concept solidified through the painting and play dough projects. A logical-mathematically strong child will benefit from the sorting project. If we look for ways to present information to our students that taps into as many intelligences as possible, we create a learning environment that is more student centered and will reach more students. Be aware, however, not every concept we teach will allow us to present information in a wide variety of ways. Some concepts lend themselves better to one form or another. Always keep this in mind and look to see if you can



adapt, or be ready to give students the extra help they may need.

We all have our own “Learning Styles”. A “Learning Style” is our preferred way to take in and process information. Some of us are more visual learners; we have to see or read the information. Others are auditory, we need to hear the information. Our tactile and kinesthetic learners have to touch things and have movement involved in their learning endeavors. This is important information for you to know and for your students to know about themselves. If we can help our students understand their own learning style and where their stronger intelligences lie, we will be giving them a tremendous tool for all future learning. We can use the knowledge of their learning styles to design lessons that will allow them to work within their higher intelligences.

Please don't ever forget this statement: “ALL STUDENTS CAN LEARN!” If you believe anything else, you will be doing a great disservice to your students!! Every student can learn. Here is what will vary; what they learn, how they learn and the pace at which they learn. You may have heard teachers say things such as, “Oh, he/she struggles all the time; I don't expect him/her to really learn this,” or some other negative statement. Right from the start, the teacher does not have the child's best interest at heart and is not giving the student the respect or chance he/she deserves. Our students will learn at different rates, they will learn more or less information than their peers and they may learn in various ways, but **THEY ALL CAN LEARN!**

Never make assumptions about students. It's easy to look at a situation and make assumptions without really knowing the truth. When we do this, we are disrespectful to students, but we also run the risk of providing inappropriate experiences for children. Here are some common assumptions we see made:

1. A student is disengaged in class. She doesn't turn work in, and doesn't participate in class. **ASSUMPTION:** *She is lazy.* This assumption can lead teachers to punish the student, give up on the student and have little expectations for them. This does not support the child in the learning process. There are many other things that could be the problem; the student doesn't have the skills for the assignments, lack of understanding, an issue that has their mind focused somewhere else, even a sight or hearing problem. The reality is we have to know what is going on with the student in order to assist them. We can't assume!
2. The parents of one of your students never comes to conferences. You have tried to contact them, but you never seem to be able to connect with them. **ASSUMPTION:** *The parents don't care and are not vested in the child's education.* Parents have many expectations on them and sometimes it isn't easy to have the time to come to school functions, or even connect with teachers. While we may believe that parents should make their child's education a priority, the reality is that parents sometimes have to make hard choices and their may be other things, such as working, that take priority.
3. One of your students does well in class, but he never turns in homework. You have extended due dates at times, but he still never seems to turn in the work. **ASSUMPTION:** *He doesn't care about school, and there must be something going on at home.* It is possible this student has to work a job after school to help support the family, or a younger student may be in child care after school and then to a family member for care after that. The student may lack some of the skills to complete the work and there is no one at home who can help him.

In all of these scenarios, and there are many more, if we make an assumption about what is happening chances are that we are going to be wrong. If we are wrong, then we will probably handle the issue in an inappropriate manner and it will not benefit the student. Again, find out what is happening and work with the information you gain from the student.

It would be nice if all of our students came to school with no outside concerns, worries, negative influences or having experienced indifference to education, however, that's not the real world. For some of our students, school is the least of their concerns. How do we help students learn when they are dealing with a multitude of outside concerns and differences. The big key is awareness and “RAT.”

One of the biggest influences on a student is the family. There are a wide variety of family structures in our society today. The current state of our economy has placed a financial burden on many families. The structure of a family, the expectations they have for their children, the economic and social climate that they live under and the overall well being of the family will influence a child's performance in school. It is our responsibility to be aware of situations and help students work and deal with them, not ridicule or punish because of circumstances. We have to respect families for what they are, accept and tolerate their ideas, values and circumstances even if we don't agree. Here is another place where we have to push our bias and prejudices aside and look at what's best for the student. For example, a child goes to day care every day after school and in the evening he/she is cared for by grandparents because one or more parents work. We would want to look closely at any homework we might consider sending home. Chances are this child is not going to have the opportunity, or the support, to get it done. Sending it anyway sets the student up for failure from the start. We might have to modify our practices to

accommodate this child. Being a teacher is not easy! If you think it is, I suggest you look for another career. I don't want you to be disappointed later. In order to do the best for our students, we often have to go the extra mile, change many of our practices, and look for ways to accommodate students and their situations.

The community in which you teach and the children live will have an influence on them, as well as on what happens in your classroom. The society in which we live will also influence what happens. We have to be aware of the values and expectations of the community in which we teach. Not only that, but we have to share those same values and expectations. If we do not, then we need to consider teaching somewhere else. Some of the concerns facing our children today are:

- Economic Status
- Racism
- Discrimination
- Immigration and Cultural Concerns
- Substance Abuse
- Child Abuse
- Sexual Concerns
- Obesity
- Bullying
- School Violence
- Truancy
- Drop Out

Our job would be much easier if our students lived in a perfect world and we taught in it as well. That is not reality. As educators, we have to recognize that our students have many outside influences that will impact their performance in school. As we move through the remainder of the semester, we will be talking more about the students in our classrooms and what we can do to provide them with positive learning experiences. Your classroom will most likely be a very diverse place, but please remember to keep your bias and prejudices out of your work with students. Take the time to know students; their likes/dislikes, their strengths/weaknesses, learning styles, higher intelligences, outside influences (family, church, extracurricular activities) and always practice the concepts of "Respect, Acceptance and Tolerance." We have to find the best way to help our students deal with those outside factors AND help them learn at the same time. Again, it's not an easy task. At times it will take all of the patience and energy we have. However, I will tell you, it is one of the most rewarding experiences you will ever have!

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CHAPTER 5

Creating a Positive Learning Environment

An excerpt from a professional journal kept by Kelvin Lee Seifer when teaching kindergarten:

November 14th: Today my student Carol sat in the circle, watching others while we all played Duck, Duck, Goose (in this game, one student is outside the circle, tags another student who then chases the first person around the circle). Carol's turn had already passed. Apparently she was bored now, because she flopped on her back, smiling broadly, rolling around luxuriously on the floor in the path of the other runners. Several classmates noticed her, smiled or giggled, began flopping down as well. One chaser tripped over a "flopper."

Sit up, Carol," said I, the ever-vigilant teacher. "You're in the way." But no result. I repeated twice more, firmly; then moved to pick her up.

Instantly Carol ran to the far side of the gym, still smiling broadly. Then her best friend ran off with her. Now a whole new game was launched, or really two games: "Run-from-the-teacher" and "Enjoy-being-watched-by-everybody." A lot more exciting, unfortunately, than Duck, Duck, Goose!

An excerpt from Kelvin's same journal several years later, when he was teaching math in high school:

March 4th: The same four students sat in the back again today, as usual. They seem to look in every direction except at me, even when I'm explaining material that they need to know. The way they smile and whisper to each other, it seems almost like they are "in love" with each other, though I can't be sure who loves whom the most. Others—students not part of the foursome—seem to react variously. Some seem annoyed, turn the other way, avoid talking with the group, and so on. But others seem almost envious—as if they want to be part of the "in" group, too, and were impressed with the foursome's ability to get away with being inattentive and almost rude. Either way, I think a lot of other students are being distracted.

Twice during the period today, I happened to notice members of the group passing a note, and then giggling and looking at me. By the end, I had had enough of this sort of thing, so I kept them in briefly after class and asked one of them to read the note. They looked a bit embarrassed and hesitant, but eventually one of them opened the note and read it out loud. "Choose one," it said. "Mr. Seifert looks 1) old ___, 2) stupid ___, or 3) clueless ___."

Kelvin's experiences in managing these very different classrooms taught him what every teacher knows or else quickly learns: management matters a lot. But his experiences also taught that management is about more than correcting the misbehaviors of individuals, more than just "discipline." Classroom management is also about "orchestrating" or coordinating entire sets or sequences of learning activities so that everyone, misbehaving or not, learns as easily and productively as possible. Educators sometimes, therefore, describe good classroom management as the creation of a positive learning environment, because the term calls attention to the totality of activities and people in a classroom, as well as to their goals and expectations about learning (Jones & Jones, 2007). When Kelvin was teaching, he used both terms almost interchangeably, though in speaking of management he more often was referring to individual students' behavior and learning, and in using the term learning environment he more often meant the overall "feel" of the class as a whole.

WHY CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT MATTERS

Managing the learning environment is both a major responsibility and an on-going concern for every teacher, even for those with years of experience (Good & Brophy, 2002). There are several reasons. In the first place, a lot goes on in classrooms simultaneously, even when students seem to be doing only "one" task together. Twenty-five students may all be working on a sheet of math problems, but look more closely: several may be stuck on a particular problem, but each for different reasons. A few others have worked only the first problem or two and are now chatting quietly with each other instead of continuing. Still others have finished and are wondering what to do next. At any one moment each student needs something different—different information, different hints, different kinds of encouragement. The diversity increases even more if the teacher deliberately assigns multiple activities to different groups or individuals (for example, if some are doing a reading assignment while others do the math problems).

Another reason that managing the environment is challenging is because a teacher can never predict everything that will

happen in a class. A well-planned lesson may fall flat on its face, or take less time than you expect, and you find yourself improvising to fill class time. On the other hand an unplanned moment may become a wonderful, sustained exchange among students; so you have to drop previous plans and “go with the flow” of their discussion. Interruptions happen continually: a fire drill, a quick drop-in visit from another teacher or from the principal, a call on the intercom from the office. An activity may turn out well, but also end up rather differently than you intended; you therefore have to decide how, if at all, to adjust the next day to allow for this surprise.

A third reason for the importance of management is that students form opinions and perceptions about your teaching that may coincide neither with your own nor with other students’. What seems to you like encouragement of a shy student may seem to the student herself like “forced participation.” A more eager, outgoing classmate watching your special effort to encourage the shy student, however, may not see you as either encouraging or coercing, but as overlooking or ignoring other students who are already more willing to participate. The variety of perceptions can lead to surprises in students’ responses to you—most often small ones, but occasionally more major.

At the broadest, society-wide level, management challenges teachers because public schooling is not voluntary, and students’ presence in a classroom is therefore not a sign, in and of itself, that they wish to be there. Students’ presence is instead just a sign that an opportunity exists for teachers to motivate students to learn. Many students, of course, do enjoy learning and being in school—but not all. Others do enjoy school, but primarily because teachers have worked hard to make classroom life pleasant and interesting. They become motivated because you have successfully created a positive learning environment and have sustained it through skillful management.

Fortunately it is possible to earn this sort of commitment from students, and this chapter describes some ways of doing so. We begin with some ways of preventing management problems in the first place by increasing students’ focus on learning. The methods include the arrangement of classroom space, the establishment of procedures, routines, and rules, and communicating the importance of learning both to students and to parents. After these prevention oriented discussions, we look at ways of refocusing students when and if their minds or actions do stray from the tasks at hand. As you probably know from your own experience as a student, bringing students back on task can happen in many ways, ways that vary widely in the energy and persistence required of the teacher. We try to indicate some of this diversity, but because of space limitations and because of the richness of classroom life, we cannot describe them all.

PREVENTING MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS BY FOCUSING STUDENTS ON LEARNING

The easiest management problems to solve are ones that do not happen in the first place! You can help to prevent problems even before the first day of school by arranging classroom furniture and materials in ways that make learning as easy to focus on as possible. Later, during the first few days, you can establish procedures and rules that support a focus on learning even more.

Arranging Classroom Space

Viewed broadly, it may be tempting to think that classrooms are arranged in similar ways, but there are actually important alternative arrangements to consider. Variations happen because of grade level, the subjects taught, the teacher’s philosophy of education, and of course the size of the room and the furniture available. Whatever the arrangement that you choose, it should help students to focus on learning tasks as much as possible and minimize the chances of distractions. Beyond these basic principles, however, the “best” arrangement depends on what your students need and on the kind of teaching that you prefer and feel able to provide (Bothmer, 2003; Nations & Boyett, 2002). Here are some ideas to help choose among your options. In considering them (and before moving too much furniture around your room!), you might want to try experimenting with spatial arrangements “virtually” by using one of the computer programs available on the Internet (see, for example, [Class Set-Up Tool](#)).

Displays and Wall Space

All classrooms have walls, of course, and how you fill or use them can affect the mood or feeling of a classroom. More displays make the room more interesting and can be used to reinforce curriculum goals and display (and hence recognize) students’ work. But too many displays can also make a room seem “busy” or distracting as well as physically smaller; and they can also be more work to maintain. If you are starting a new school year, then, there is usually a need to decorate some of the wall or bulletin board space, but no urgent need to fill it all. Leaving some open space can give flexibility to respond to curriculum or learning needs that emerge after the year is underway. The same advice applies for displays that are especially high maintenance, such as aquariums, pets, and plants. These can serve wonderfully as learning aids, but do not have to be in place on the first day of school. Not only the students, but also you yourself, may already have enough distractions to cope with at that time.



In the elementary years, we tend to find classrooms filled with displays. The walls are covered and sometimes there are even things hanging from the ceiling. All of these things will draw students attention, and very well may draw their attention away from you and from their work. There is too much to attend to and even a typically developing child may have difficulty deciding on where to focus their attention. For a child who may have any type of sensory concern or attention difficulty, there may now be extremely overwhelmed and have great difficulty “paying attention” to what you want them to focus on. Consider carefully in the elementary years how much you may decorate a classroom.

In our secondary classrooms, we sometimes see the opposite happen; there is a lack of color and visual display. As with our younger children, be sure you do not overwhelm the classroom, but be sure you try to add color and displays

that support learning and will add to the overall comfort of the classroom.

Computers in the Classroom

If you are like the majority of teachers, you may have one or more computer in your classroom, and their placement may be pre-determined by location of power and cable outlets. If so, you need to think about computer placement early in the process of setting up a room. Once the location of computers is set, locations for desks, high-usage shelves, and other moveable items can be chosen more sensibly—in general so as to minimize distractions to students and to avoid unnecessary traffic congestion.

Visibility of and Interactions with Students

Learning is facilitated if the furniture and space allow you to see all students and to interact with them from a comfortable distance. Usually this means that the main, central part of the room—where desks and tables are usually located—needs to be as open and as spacious as possible. While this idea may seem obvious, enacting it can sometimes be challenging in practice if the room itself is small or unusually shaped. In classrooms with young students (kindergarten), furthermore, open spaces tend to allow, if not invite, movement of children that is longer and faster—a feature that you may consider either constructive or annoying, depending on your educational goals and the actual level of activity that occurs.

Spatial Arrangements Unique To Grade Levels or Subjects

Some room arrangements depend significantly on the grade level or subject area of the class. If you teach in elementary school, for example, you may need to think about where students can keep their daily belongings, such as coats and lunches. In some schools, these can be kept outside the classroom—but not in all schools. Some subjects and grade levels, furthermore, lend themselves especially well to small group interaction, in which case you might prefer not to seat students in rows, but around several small-group tables or work areas. The latter arrangement is sometimes preferred by elementary teachers, but is also useful in high schools wherever students need lots of counter space, as in some shops courses, or wherever they need to interact, as in English as a Second Language courses (McCafferty, Jacobs, & Iddings, 2006). The key issue in deciding between tables and rows, however, is not grade level or subject as such, but the amount of small group interaction you want to encourage, compared to the amount of whole-group instruction. As a rule, tables make talking with peers easier, and rows make listening to the teacher more likely and group work slightly more awkward to arrange.

Keep in mind that not all of us function well in group settings. Grouping children in desk clusters, or at tables, may be productive for some of our students. Others, however, may work more effectively if they sit alone. Please consider offering both options to your students. If a child wishes to sit on their own, allow them to do so. If you are going to do any type of group work, you can easily assign them to a group of students for the activity.

Ironically, some teachers experience challenges about room arrangement without even having a room of their own, because they must “float” or move among other teachers’ rooms. “Floating” is especially likely among specialized teachers (e.g. music teachers in elementary schools, who move from class to class) and in schools that are short on classrooms overall. Floating can sometimes be annoying to the teacher, though it actually also has advantages, such as not having to take responsibility for how other teachers’ rooms are arranged). If you find yourself floating, it helps to consider a few key strategies, such as:

- consider using a permanent cart to move crucial supplies from room to room;
- make sure that every one of your rooms has an overhead projector (do not count on using chalkboards in other teachers' rooms);
- talk to the other teachers about having at least one shelf or corner in each room designated for your exclusive use.

Establishing Daily Procedures and Routines

Procedures or routines are specific ways of doing common, repeated classroom tasks or activities. Examples include checking daily attendance, dealing with students who arrive late, or allowing students to use the bathroom during class or go to their lockers to get materials which they forgot to bring. Procedures also include ways of turning in or retrieving daily homework (e.g. putting it on a designated shelf at a particular time), or of gaining the teacher's attention during quiet seat work (e.g. raising your hand and waiting), or of choosing and starting a "free choice" activity after completing a classroom assignment.

Procedures serve the largely practical purpose of making activities and tasks flow smoothly and efficiently—a valuable and necessary purpose in classrooms, where the actions of many people have to be coordinated within limited amounts of time. As such, procedures are more like social conventions than like moral expectations. They are not primarily about what is ethically right or ethically desirable to do (Turiel, 2006).^[4] Most procedures or routines can be accomplished in more than one way, with only minor differences in success at the outcomes. There is more than one way, for example, for the procedure of taking attendance: the teacher could call the role, delegate a student to call the role, or simply note students' presence on a seating chart. Each variation accomplishes essentially the same task, and the choice among them may therefore be less important than the fact that the class coordinates its actions somehow, by committing to some sort of choice.

For teachers, of course, an initial task is to establish procedures and routines in the first place. Because of the conventional quality of procedures, some teachers find that it works well simply to announce and explain key procedures without inviting much discussion from students ("Here is how we will choose partners for the group work"). Other teachers, however, prefer to invite input from students when creating procedures (asking "What do you feel is the best way for students to get my attention during a quiet reading time?"). Both approaches have advantages as well as disadvantages. Simply announcing key procedures saves time and insures consistency in case you are teaching more than one class (as you would in high school), but it creates a bigger responsibility to choose procedures that are truly reasonable and practical. On the other hand, inviting students' input can help students to become aware of and committed to procedures, but at the cost of taking more time to establish them, and at the risk of creating confusion if you teach multiple classes, each of which adopts different procedures. Whatever approach you choose, you and the students of course have to take into account the procedures or rules imposed by the school or school district as a whole. A school may have a uniform policy or expectation about how to record daily attendance, for example, and that policy may determine, either partly or completely, how you take attendance with your particular students.

Establishing Classroom Rules

Unlike procedures or routines, rules express standards of behavior for which individual students need to take responsibility. Although they may help in insuring the practical efficiency of classroom tasks, they are really about encouraging students to be personally responsible for learning, as well as for behaving decently and respectfully with each other.

Most educational experts recommend keeping the number of rules to a minimum in order to make them easier to remember (Thorson, 2003; Brophy, 2003). Another feature is that they are stated in positive terms ("Do X...") rather than negative terms ("Do not do Y..."), a strategy that emphasizes and clarifies what students should do rather than what they should avoid. A third feature is that each rule actually covers a collection of more specific behaviors. The rule "Bring all materials to class," for example, potentially covers bringing pencils, paper, textbooks, homework papers, and permission slips—depending on the situation. As a result of being stated somewhat generally, rules contain a degree of ambiguity that sometimes requires interpretation. Infractions may occur, that is, that are marginal or "in a grey area," rather than clearcut. A student may bring a pen, for example, but the pen may not work properly, and you may therefore wonder whether this incident is really a failure to follow the rule, or just an unfortunate (and in this case minor) fault of the pen manufacturer. For myself, it is not the student's fault if the pen fails to work. They have fulfilled the requirement of "bringing materials to class". (As a side note, always have extra pens and pencils available for students for just such incidents.)

As with classroom procedures, rules can be planned either by the teacher alone, or by the teacher with advice from students. The arguments for each approach are similar to the arguments for procedures: rules "laid on" by the teacher are quicker and easier to present to students, but rules influenced by the students may be supported more fully by the students. Because rules focus strongly on personal responsibility, however, there is a stronger case for involving students in making classroom rules than in making classroom procedures (Brookfield, 2006; Kohn, 2006). In any case the question of who plans classroom rules is not necessarily an either/or choice. It is possible in principle to impose certain rules on students (for

example, “Always be polite to each other”) but let the students determine the consequences for violations of certain rules (for example, “If a student is discourteous to a classmate, he/she must apologize to the student in writing”). Some mixture of influences is probably inevitable, in fact, if only because of your own moral commitments as a teacher and because the school itself is likely to have rules of its own (like “No smoking in the school” or “Always walk in the hallways”). A classroom set of rules therefore might need to refer to and honor this broader source of rules somehow, if only by including a classroom rule stating something like “Obey all school rules.”

I strongly believe in allowing students to make the classroom guidelines, with our guidance. I don’t like the word “rules”, as it implies punishment if you don’t follow them. I prefer “guidelines” as they are statements that will guide our behavior. As noted earlier, be sure to state them in the positive; what it is you want students to do. I have used this practice with children as young as four and it has worked very well.

School age children are in the stage where they need to have control over their world and make real world decisions. Allowing them to make the classroom rules meets those emotional needs. Students will also follow the guidelines and support each other more when they have created them.

In my classrooms, on the first day, we talked about being together for the year and we had to set some guidelines for our behavior to help every learn and stay safe. I would ask them what types of things we needed to do in order for everyone to stay safe, keep our materials safe, and learn.

I asked children to give me their ideas and I wrote them on the board. Any idea was acceptable in this stage, even if it was something I didn’t want to see as a guideline. Once we had all of the ideas, we then reviewed each of them. We asked three questions:

1. Will this guideline keep us safe?
2. Will this guideline keep our materials from being broken, destroyed, etc.?
3. Will this guideline help us learn?

If we answered “No” to any of these questions, we eliminated the idea. What was left we used as our guidelines. Sometimes we needed to re-word the statement, or I suggested an addition to it. Understand that ultimately you have the final decision, but you will be surprised at what students are able to devise on their own. Our guidelines were also fluid. If we found a need down the road for a new guideline, we added it to our list.

Once we had our statements, I wrote them on a large piece of paper with the heading, “Staying Safe and Loving to Learn: Our Class Guidelines”, and then each student signed the paper. I signed it also as I was a part of the learning environment and I was expected to follow the same guidelines. We hung this in the room for all to see. Over time, you will find students referring to this document and guiding their classmates in appropriate behaviors.

We use these guidelines to help develop positive social skills, as well as positive and effective learning skills; they are not grounds for punishment. If our guideline is to “Respect everyone we come in contact with”, then a student who is disrespectful should not be punished. We are teachers; we need to teach. We need to talk with the student and let him/her know how their words or actions were not respectful; talk about what should have been said or done, and then allow the student to make the decision to apologize, or have them ask the person who was “wronged” what they can do to make the situation better. Handling this incident in this manner requires the student to take responsibility for their actions and learn how to display the appropriate behaviors; punishment does not do this. We will talk about this idea more, but think long and hard on this!

PACING AND STRUCTURING LESSONS AND ACTIVITIES

One of the best ways to prevent management problems is by pacing and structuring lessons or activities as smoothly and continuously as possible. Reaching this goal depends on three major strategies:

- selecting tasks or activities at an appropriate level of difficulty for your students. (This means there may be multiple activities to meet the varying abilities of your students.)
- providing a moderate level of structure or clarity to students about what they are supposed to do, especially during transitions between activities, and
- keeping alert to the flow and interplay of behaviors for the class as a whole and for individuals within it.

Each of these strategies presents its own special challenges to teachers, but also its own opportunities for helping students to learn.

Choosing Tasks at an Appropriate Level of Difficulty

As experienced teachers know and as research has confirmed, students are most likely to engage with learning when tasks

are of moderate difficulty, neither too easy nor too hard and therefore neither boring nor frustrating (Britt, 2005). Finding the right level of difficulty, however, can sometimes be a challenge if you have little experience in teaching a particular grade level or curriculum, or even if a class is simply new to you and in this sense “unknown.” Whether familiar to you or not, members of any class are likely to have diverse abilities and readiness, and this fact alone makes it harder to determine what level of difficulty is appropriate. A common strategy for dealing with these ambiguities is to begin units, lessons, or projects with tasks or content that is relatively easy and familiar, and then gradually introduce more difficult material or tasks until students seem challenged, but not overwhelmed. Using this strategy gives the teacher a chance to observe and diagnose students’ learning needs before adjusting content, and gives students a chance to orient themselves to the teacher’s expectations and the topic of study without becoming stressed or frustrated prematurely. Later in a unit, lesson, or project, students are then in a better position to deal with more difficult tasks or content (Van Merriënboer, 2003). The principle seems to help even with “authentic” learning projects—ones that resemble real-world activities of students (such as learning to drive an automobile), and that present a variety of complex tasks simultaneously. Even in those cases it helps for the teacher to isolate and focus on the simplest subtasks first (such as “put the key in the ignition”) and only move to harder tasks later (such as parallel parking).

Sequencing instruction is only a partial solution to finding the best “level” of instruction, because it still does not deal with lasting differences among students as individuals. The core challenge to teachers is to fully individualize or differentiate instruction: to tailor instruction or activities not only to the class as a group, but to the differences among members of the class? One way to approach this problem is to plan different content or activities for different students or groups of students. While one group works on Task A, another group works on Task B; one group works on relatively easy math problems, for example, while another works on harder ones. Taken very far, managing multiple activities or tasks obviously complicates a teacher’s job, but it can and has been done by many teachers (and it also can make teaching more interesting!).

Providing Moderate Amounts of Structure and Detail

Chances are that at some point in your educational career you have asked, or at least wished, that a teacher would clarify or explain an assignment more fully, and thereby give it more structure or organization. Students’ need and desire for clarity is especially common with assignments that are by nature open-ended, such as long essays, large projects, or creative works. Simply being told to “write an essay critiquing the novel,” for example, leaves more room for uncertainty (and worry) than being given guidelines about what the essay should contain, what topics or parts it should have, and its appropriate length or style (Chesebro, 2003). Students’ need for structure and clarity varies, furthermore, not only among assignments, but among students as individuals. Some students desire it more than others, and perform especially well when provided with relatively more structure and clarity. Students with certain kinds of learning difficulties, in particular, often learn more effectively and stay on task more if provided with somewhat more explicit or detailed instructions about the specific tasks expected for assignments (Marks, 2003).

As a teacher, the challenge is to accommodate students’ need for clarity without making guidance so specific or detailed that students have little room to think for themselves. Carried to a (ridiculous) extreme, for example, a teacher can give “clear” instructions for an essay by announcing not only exactly which articles to read and cite in preparing for the essay and which topics or issues to cover, but even the wording of the key sentences in their essays. This much specificity may reduce students’ uncertainties and make the teacher’s task of evaluating the essays relatively straightforward and easy. But it also reduces or even eliminates the educational value of the assignment—assuming, of course, that its purpose is to get students to think for themselves.

Ideally, then, structure should be moderate rather than extreme. There should be just enough to give students some sense of direction and to stimulate more accomplishment than if they worked with less structure or guidance. This ideal is essentially Vygotsky’s idea of the “Zone of Proximal Development”: a place (figuratively speaking) where students get more done with help than without it. The ideal amount of guidance—and the “location” of the Zone of Proximal Development—may vary with the assignment and with the student, and it may (hopefully) decrease over time for all students. One student may need more guidance to do his or her best in math, but less guidance in order to write his best essay. Another student may need the reverse. Both students may need less at the end of the year than at the beginning.

Managing Transitions

The time between activities is often full of distractions and “lost” time, and is often when inappropriate behaviors are especially likely to occur. Part of the problem is intrinsic to transitions: students often have to wait before a new activity begins, and therefore get bored, at the same moment when the teacher may be preoccupied with locating and arranging materials for the new activity. From the point of view of students, therefore, transitions may seem essentially like unsupervised group time, when (seemingly) “anything goes.”

Minimizing such problems requires two strategies, one of which is easier to implement than the other. The easier strategy

is for you, as teacher, to organize materials as well as possible ahead of time, so that you minimize the time needed to begin a new activity or class session. This advice sounds simple, and mostly is, but it can sometimes take a bit of practice to implement smoothly.

A second, a more complex strategy, is to teach students as many ways as possible to manage their own behavior during transitions (Marzano & Marzano, 2004).^[5] If students talk too loudly between activities, for example, then discuss with them what constitutes appropriate levels or amounts of talk during those times, as well as about the need for them to monitor their own sound level at that time. Or if students stop work early in anticipation of the end of an activity, then talk about—or even practice—using a signal from yourself to indicate the true ending point for an activity. If certain students continue working beyond the end of an activity, on the other hand, then try giving students advance warning of the impending end of the activity, and remind them about their taking the responsibility for actually finishing work once they hear the advance warning. And so on. The point of all of these tactics is to encourage students' sense of responsibility for their behavior transitions, and thereby reduce your own need to monitor them at that crucial time.

None of these ideas, of course, mean that you, as teacher, can or should give up monitoring students' behavior entirely. Chances are that you still will need to notice if and when someone talks too loudly, finishes too early, or continues too long, and you will still need to give those students appropriate reminders. But the amount of reminding will be less to the extent that students can remind and monitor themselves—a welcome trend at any time during the day, but especially during transitions.

Maintaining the Flow of Activities

A lot of classroom management is really about keeping activities flowing smoothly, both during individual lessons and across the school day. The trouble with this straightforward-sounding idea, however, is that there is never just “one” event happening at a time, even if only one activity has been formally planned and is supposed to be occurring. Even if, for example, everyone is supposed to be attending a single whole-class discussion on a topic, individual students will be having different experiences at any one moment. Several students may be listening and contributing comments, for example, but a few others may be planning what they want to say next and ignoring the current speakers, still others may be ruminating about what a previous speaker said, and still others may be thinking about unrelated matters, like using the restroom, food, or after school events. Things get even more complicated if the teacher deliberately plans multiple activities: in that case some students may interact with the teacher, for example, while others do work in an unsupervised group or work independently in a different part of the room. How is a teacher to keep activities flowing smoothly in the face of such variety?

A common mistake of beginning teachers in multi-faceted activity settings like these is to pay too much attention to any one activity, student, or small group, at the expense of noticing and responding to all the others. If you are helping a student on one side of the room but someone on the other side disturbs classmates with off-task conversation, it tends to be less effective either to finish with the student you are helping before attending to the disruption, or to interrupt your help for the student until you have solved the disruption on the other side of the room. Either approach is likely to allow the flow of activities to be disrupted somewhere; there is a risk that either the student's chatting may spread to others, or the interrupted student may become bored with waiting to regain the teacher's attention and get off-task herself.

A better solution, though at first it may seem tricky or challenging, is to attend to both events at once—a strategy that was named “Withitness” in a series of now-classic research studies several decades ago (Kounin, 1970). Withitness does not mean that you focus on all simultaneous activities with equal care, but only that you are aware of multiple activities, behaviors, and events to some degree. At a particular moment, for example, you may be focusing on helping a student, but in some corner of your mind you also notice when chatting begins on the other side of the room. You have, as the saying goes, “eyes in the back of your head.” Research has found that experienced teachers are much more likely to show withitness than inexperienced teachers, and that these qualities are associated with their managing classrooms successfully (Emmer & Stough, 2001).

Simultaneous awareness—withitness—makes possible responses to the multiple events that are immediate and nearly simultaneous—what educators sometimes called “Overlapping”. The teacher's responses to each event or behavior need not take equal time, nor even be equally noticeable to all students. If you are helping one student with seat work at the precise moment when another student begins chatting off-task, for example, a quick glance to the second student may be enough to bring him back to the work at hand, and may scarcely interrupt your conversation with the first student, or be noticed by others who are not even involved. The result is a smoother flow to activities overall.

As a new teacher, you may find your initial skill at “withitness” and overlapping develops more easily in some situations than in others. It may be easier to keep an eye (and an ear) on the entire class during familiar routines, for example, like taking attendance, and harder to do the same during lessons or activities that are unfamiliar or complex, such as introducing a new topic or unit that you have never taught before. But skill at broadening your attention can and does increase with time and practice. So it helps to keep trying. Merely demonstrating to students that you are “withit,” in fact, even without making deliberate overlapping responses, can sometimes deter students from task behavior. Someone who is tempted to pass notes in class, for example, might not do so because she decides that you will probably notice her doing it anyway.

Communicating the Importance of Learning and of Positive Behavior

Taken together, arranging space, establishing procedures and rules, and developing “withitness” about multiple events set the stage for communicating an important message: that the classroom is a place where learning and positive social behavior are priorities. In addition, teachers can convey this message by giving feedback to students in a timely way, by keeping accurate records of their performance, and by deliberately communicating with parents or caregivers about their children and about activities in class.

Giving Timely Feedback

Feedback is a term often used by educators to refer to responses given to students about their behavior or performance. Feedback is essential for students if they are to learn or if they are to develop classroom behavior that is new or more subtle and “mature.” But feedback can only be fully effective if received as soon as possible, when it is still relevant to the task or activity at hand which is usually as soon as possible (Reynolds, 1992).^[8] A score on a test is more informative immediately after a test than after a six-month delay, when students may have forgotten much of the content of the test. A teacher’s comment to a student about an inappropriate, off-task behavior may not be especially welcome immediately after the behavior occurs, but it can be more influential and informative then later when both teacher and student have trouble remembering the context of the off-task behavior, and in this sense may literally “not know what they are talking about.” The same is true for comments about a positive behavior by a student: hearing a compliment right away makes it easier to connect the comment with the behavior, and allows the compliment to influence the student more strongly. Even though there are of course practical limits to how fast feedback can be given, the general principle is clear: feedback tends to work better when it is timely.

When it comes to feedback in regards to behavior, we have to engage students in conversations about what took place and how they can display more positive behaviors in the future. Students need this type of support and feedback if we want them to change their actions. Punishing them is not feedback and it is not effective in changing behaviors.

Students also need feedback when it comes to the work they do in the classroom. We have all had teachers who collect our essay, but don’t return it for two or three weeks. By that point, students are no longer vested in the assignment and they are not going to learn from any comments or feedback you are given, assuming feedback is given.

If we ask students to complete an assignment, project, etc., we need to be sure we not only return it timely, but also provide feedback. Let students know where they were strong, things you may have liked about the assignment, as well as how they can improve in areas. Feedback should be specific and help students learn. Comments such as “Good Job”, “Nice Work”, or “Needs More Detail”, do not give students the information they need in order to improve or continue a positive strategy, etc. They have to know what was “good” or “nice.” You can use these terms, but you need to give them the information that warrants this statement. Here are some examples:

1. You have two more words correct on your spelling test than last week. Good job!
2. All of your colors complement each other in your drawing and the faces are realistic and express emotion. Nice work!
3. There is more detail needed in your paper on arson. You could have included the reasons why people resort to arson, and what types of help is available for serial arsonists.

Can you see how these statements provide the student with more information that they can use as they move forward in their studies? This is the type of feedback we need to give to students. When we provide this for them, and return their work with this feedback in a timely manner, we can provide a valuable and strong support for their continued learning.

During the days or weeks while students wait for a test or assignment to be returned, they are left without information about quality or nature of their performance; at the extreme they may even have to complete a next test or assignment before getting any information from an earlier one. (Perhaps you have already experienced this problem during your years as a student!)

Maintaining Accurate Records

Accurate records are helpful not only for scores on tests, quizzes or assignments, but also for keeping descriptive information about the nature of students’ academic skills or progress. A common way to do so is the student portfolio, which is a compilation of the student’s work and on-going assessments of it added by the teacher or by the student (Moritz & Christie, 2005; White, 2005). To know of how a student’s science project evolved from its beginning, for example, a teacher and student can keep a portfolio of lab notes, logs, preliminary data, and the like. To know how a student’s writing skills are developing, on the other hand, they could keep a portfolio of early drafts on various writing assignments. As the work accumulates, the student can discuss it with the teacher, and either of them can write brief reflections on its strengths thus far and on the next steps needed to improve the work further. By providing a way to respond to work as it evolves, portfolios can respond to students’ work relatively promptly, and in any case sooner than if a teacher waited until the work was complete or final.

Communicating with Parents and Caregivers

Teachers are responsible for keeping parents informed and involved to whatever extent is practical. Virtually all parents understand and assume that schools are generally intended for learning, but communication can enrich their understanding of how this purpose is realized in their particular child's classroom, and it can show them more precisely what their particular child is doing there. Such understanding in turn allows parents and caregivers to support their child's learning more confidently and "intelligently," and in this sense contributes, at least indirectly, to a positive learning environment in their child's class.

There are various ways to communicate with parents, each with advantages and limitations. Here are three common examples:

- *A regular classroom newsletter:* The advantage of a newsletter is that it establishes a link with all parents or caregivers with comparatively little effort on the part of the teacher. At the beginning of the year, for example, a newsletter can tell about special materials that students will need, important dates to remember (like professional development days when there is no school), or about curriculum plans for the next few weeks. But newsletters also have limitations. They can seem impersonal, for example, or they may get lost on the way home and never reach parents or caregivers. They can also be impractical for teachers with multiple classes, as in high school or in specialist subjects (like music or physical education), where each class may follow a different program or have a different purpose. Email may allow us to send electronic copies of a newsletter, but either way, there is no guarantee parents will read them.
- *Telephone calls:* The main advantage of phoning is its immediacy and individuality. Teacher and parent or caregiver can talk about a particular student, behavior, or concern, and it now. By the same token, however, phone calls are not an efficient way to inform parents about events or activities that affect everyone in common. The individuality of phoning may explain why teachers tend to use this method more often when a student has a problem that is urgent or unusual—as when he has failed a test or has misbehaved seriously. Rightly or wrongly, a student's successes may not seem urgent enough to merit a call to the student's home, although I would encourage you to make positive phone calls to parents as well.
- *Parent-teacher conferences:* Most schools schedule regular times—often a day or an evening—when teachers meet briefly with any parents or caregivers who request a meeting. Under good conditions, the conferences can have the individuality of phone calls, but also the greater richness of communication possible in face-to-face meetings. Since conferences are available to all parents, they need not focus on behavior or academic problems, but often simply help to build rapport and understanding between parents or caregivers and the teacher. Sometimes too, particularly at younger grade levels, teachers organize conferences to be led by the student, who displays and explains his or her work using a portfolio or other archive of accumulated materials (Benson & Barnett, 2005; Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005). In spite of all of these advantages, though, parent-teacher conferences have limitations. Some parents have trouble getting to conferences, for example, because of their work schedules. Others may feel intimidated by any school-sponsored event because they speak limited English or because they remember getting along poorly in school themselves as children.
- *Classroom Website:* A classroom website can help keep parents informed of classroom events, school information, and serve as a reference for class guidelines, expectations or other relevant information for families.

Even if you make all of these efforts to communicate, some parents may remain out of contact. In these cases it is important to remember that the causes may not be parents' indifference to their child or to the value of education. Other possibilities exist, as some of our comments above indicate: parents may have difficulties with child care, for example, have inconvenient work schedules, or feel self-conscious because of their own limited skills (Stevens & Tollafeld, 2003). Whatever the reasons, there are ways to encourage parents who may be shy, hesitant, or busy. One is to think of how they can assist the class or school even from home—for example, by making materials to be used in class or (if they are comfortable using English) phoning other parents about class events. A second way is to have a specific task for the parents in mind—one with clear structure, definite starting and ending points, and one that truly will benefit the class if someone can in fact complete it. A third is to encourage, support, and respect the parents' presence and contributions when they do show up at school functions. Keep in mind, after all, that parents are experts about their own particular children, and without their efforts, you would have no students to teach!

RESPONDING TO STUDENT MISBEHAVIOR

So far we have focused on preventing behaviors that are off-task, inappropriate, or annoying. Our advice has all been proactive or forward-looking: plan the classroom space thoughtfully, create reasonable procedures and rules, pace lessons and activities appropriately, and communicate the importance of learning clearly. Although we consider these ideas to be

important, it would be naïve to imply they are enough to prevent all behavior problems. For various reasons, students sometimes still do things that disrupt other students or interrupt the flow of activities. At such moments the challenge is not about long-term planning but about making appropriate, but prompt responses. Misbehaviors left alone can be contagious, a process educators sometimes call the **ripple effect** (Kounin, 1970). Chatting between two students, for example, can gradually become chatting among six students; rudeness by one can eventually become rudeness by several; and so on. Because of this tendency, delaying a response to inappropriate behavior can make the job of getting students back on track harder than responding to it as immediately as possible.

There are many ways to respond to inappropriate behaviors, of course, and they vary in how much they focus on the immediate behavior of a student rather than on longer-term patterns of behavior. There are so many ways to respond, in fact, that we can only describe a sampling of the possibilities here. None are effective all of the time, though all do work at least some of the time. We start with a response that may not seem on the surface like a remedy at all—simply ignoring misbehaviors.

Ignoring Misbehaviors

A lot of misbehaviors are not important enough or frequent enough to deserve any response from the teacher at all. They are likely to disappear (or extinguish, in behaviorist terms) if simply left alone. If a student who is usually quiet during class happens to whisper to a neighbor once in awhile, it is probably simpler, less disruptive, and just as effective to ignore this rare infraction of a classroom rule. Some misbehaviors may not be worth a response even if they are frequent, as long as they do not seem to bother others. Suppose, for example, that a certain student has a habit of choosing quiet seat work times to sharpen her pencil, yet this behavior is not really noticed by others. Is it then really a problem, however unnecessary or ill-timed it may be? In both examples ignoring the behavior may be wise because there is little danger of the behavior spreading to other students or of becoming even more frequent. Interrupting your activities—or the students’—might cause more disruption than simply ignoring the problem.

That said, there can sometimes still be problems in deciding whether a particular misbehavior is indeed minor, infrequent, or unnoticed by others. Unlike in our example above, a student may whisper more than “rarely” but less than “often”: in that case, when do you decide that the whispering is in fact too frequent and needs a more active response from you? Or that student who taps her pencil, whom we mentioned above, may not bother most others, but she may nonetheless bother a few. In that case how many bothered classmates are “too many”—five, three, just one, or...? In these grey, ambiguous cases, you may need a more active way of dealing with an inappropriate behavior, like the ones described in the next sections.

Gesturing Non-verbally

Sometimes it works to communicate using gestures, eye contact, or “body language” that involve little or no speaking. Nonverbal cues are often appropriate if a misbehavior is just a bit too serious or frequent to ignore, but not serious or frequent enough to merit taking the time deliberately to speak to or talk with the student. If two students are chatting off-task for a relatively extended time, for example, sometimes a glance in their direction, a frown, or even just moving closer to the students is enough of a reminder to get them back on task. And even if these responses prove not to be enough, they may help to keep the off-task behavior from spreading to other students.

A risk of relying on nonverbal cues, however, is that some students may not understand their meaning, or even notice them. If the two chatting students mentioned above are too engrossed in their talking, for example, they may not see you glance or frown at them. Or they might notice but not interpret your cue as a reminder to get back on task. Misinterpretation of nonverbal gestures and cues is a little more likely with young children, who are still learning the subtleties of adults’ nonverbal “language” (Guerrero & Floyd, 2005; Heimann, et al., 2006). It can also be more likely with students who speak limited English and whose cultural background differs significantly from yours, because the students may be used to communicating non-verbally in ways that literally “look different” from the ways familiar to you (Marsh, Elfenbein, & Ambady, 2003).

I taught my students some basic sign language to assist with these types of situations. I taught them the sign for “bathroom” so they could simply sign and I could answer and we avoided some of those dramatic interruptions we have when someone needs to use the rest room. I also taught them, “yes”, “no”, “sit down”, “please”, “thank you”, “quiet”, “work”, and a few others. This allowed me to communicate with students in a way that did not disrupt class, and also gave them a way to communicate with me.

Natural and Logical Consequences

Consequences are the outcomes or results of an action. When managing a classroom, two kinds of consequences are especially effective, at least when the conditions are appropriate: natural consequences and logical consequences. Natural

consequences are ones that happen “naturally” or without any deliberate intention by anyone. If a student is late for class, for example, a natural consequence is that he may miss information or material that he needs to do an assignment. Logical consequences are ones that happen because of the responses of others, but that also have an obvious or “logical” relationship to the original action. If one student steals another’s lunch, for example, a logical consequence might be for the thief to reimburse the victim for the cost of the lunch. Natural and logical consequences are often woven together and thus hard to distinguish: if one student picks a fight with another student, a natural consequence might be injury to the aggressor (a natural risk of fighting), but a logical consequence might be to lose friends (the response of others to fighting). In practice both may occur.

General research has found that natural and logical consequences can be effective for minimizing undesirable behaviors, provided they are applied in appropriate situations (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004). Take, for example, a student who runs impulsively down school hallways. By the very nature of this action, he or she is especially likely to have “traffic accidents,” and thus (hopefully) to see that running is not safe and to reduce the frequency of running. Consider a student who chronically talks during class instead of working on a class-time assignment. A logical outcome of this choice is to require the student to make up the assignment later, possibly as homework. Because the behavior and the consequence are connected directly, the student is relatively likely to see the drawback of choosing to talk, and to reduce how much he or she talks on subsequent occasions. In both cases, the key features that make natural and logical consequences work is

1. they are appropriate to the misbehavior and
2. the student sees or understands the connection between the consequences and the original behavior.

Notice, though, that natural and logical consequences do not work for every problem behavior; if they did, there would be no further need for management strategies! One limitation is that misbehaviors can sometimes be so serious that no natural or logical consequence seems sufficient or appropriate. Suppose, for example, that one student deliberately breaks another student’s eyeglasses. There may be a natural consequence for the victim (he or she will not be able to see easily), but not for student who broke the glasses. There may also be no logical consequences for the aggressor that are fully satisfactory: the misbehaving student will not be able to repair the broken glasses and may not even be able to pay for new glasses for the victim.

Another limitation of natural and logical consequences is that their success depends on the motives of the misbehaving student. If the student is seeking attention or acceptance by others, then the consequences often work well. Bullying in order to impress others, for example, is more likely to lose friends than to win them—so this sort of bullying is to some extent self-limiting. If a student is seeking power over others, on the other hand, then consequences may not work well. Bullying in order to control others’ actions, for example, may actually achieve its own goal, and its “natural” results (losing friends) would not affect it. Of course, students may sometimes act from combinations of motives, with the result that natural and logical consequences may succeed, but only partially.

A third problem with natural and logical consequences is that they can easily be confused with deliberate punishment (Kohn, 2006). The difference is important. Consequences are focused on repairing damage and restoring relationships, and in this sense consequences focus on the future. Punishments, in contrast, highlight the mistake or wrongdoing and in this sense focus on the past. Consequences tend to be more solution focused; punishments tend to highlight the person who committed the action and to shame or humiliate the wrong doer.

Classroom examples of the differences are plentiful. If a student is late for class, then a consequence may be that he or she misses important information, but a punishment may be that the teacher scolds or reprimands the student. If a student speaks rudely to the teacher, a consequence may be that the teacher does not respond to the comment, or simply reminds the student to speak courteously. A punishment may be that the teacher scolds the student in the presence of other students, or even imposes a detention (“Stay after school for 15 minutes”).

We want to strive to resolve issues with students using natural and logical consequences, and avoid punishment. Punishment does not teach, it is often not connected to the actual act, and it serves to cause hard feelings on the part of the student towards the teacher and this does not help to foster a positive and productive teacher/student relationship, which we know is vital in learning.

In elementary school, taking away recess is often used as a punishment for a wide variety of behaviors. Taking away recess, however, usually never relates to the behavior of the student! I beg you never to use this punishment with your students. First of all, it does nothing to teach appropriate behaviors, and that is our goal. Recess provides a valuable learning opportunity for students. Students learn social skills such as problem solving, how to enter play, compromise, and many more through interaction on the playground. We also know that movement is vital in learning and children need the opportunity to move about and activate areas of the brain that may have “gone to sleep”, as children spend extended time sitting at a desk. There is also the motor development that takes place as they jump, climb, throw a ball and all of the other activities they engage in. While it’s often used, and is an easy “out” for teachers, talk with students about behaviors and look to give them positive strategies to follow rather than punishment for what they have done. They need recess!

Conflict Resolution and Problem Solving

When a student misbehaves persistently and disruptively, you will need strategies that are more active and assertive than the ones discussed so far, and that lead to conflict resolution—the reduction of disagreements that persist over time. The conflict resolution strategies that educators and teachers advocate and use usually have two parts (Jones, 2004).^[7] First, the strategies involve a way of identifying precisely what “the” problem is. Once this is done, they require reminding the student of classroom expectations and rules without apology or harshness, but with simple clarity and assertiveness. When used together, the clarification and assertion can not only reduce conflicts between a teacher and an individual student, but also provide a model for other students to consider when they have disagreements of their own.

Step 1: Clarifying and Identify the Problem: Classrooms can be emotional places even when its primary purpose is to promote “thinking” rather than the expression of feelings as such. The emotional quality can be quite desirable: it can give teachers and students “passion” for learning and respect or even good feelings for each other. But it can also cause trouble if students misbehave: at those moments negative feelings—annoyance, anger, discomfort—can interfere with understanding exactly what went wrong and how to set things right again. Allow all involved to calm down and then let each individual state their view of the problem. If the issue is between two students, let each share their side of the story. If the issue involves you and a student, let the student state his view, and then you share yours.

Step 2: Active, Empathetic Listening: Diagnosing accurately the conflict is necessary in order to resolve it. We need to use “Active Listening”—attending carefully to all aspects of what a student says and attempting to understand or empathize with it as fully as possible, even if you do not agree with what is being said (Cooper & Simonds, 2003). Active Listening involves asking a lot of questions in order continually to check your understanding. It also involves encouraging the student to elaborate or expand on his or her remarks, and paraphrasing and summarizing what the student has said in order to check your perceptions of what is being said. It is important not to move too fast toward “solving” the problem with advice, instructions, or scolding, even if these are responses that you might, as a teacher, feel responsible for making. Responding too soon in these ways can shut down communication prematurely, and leave you with an inaccurate impression of the source of the problem.

Depending on the issue, you may want to use Step 3 or skip this and use Step 4. For most conflicts that involve two students, we will use Step 4.

Step 3: Assertive Discipline and I-Messages: Once you have listened well enough to understand the student’s point of view, it helps to frame your responses and comments in terms of how the student’s behavior affects you as a teacher. The comments should have several features:

- They should be *assertive*—neither passive and apologetic, nor unnecessarily hostile or aggressive. State what the problem is, as matter-of-factly as possible: “Joe, you are talking while I’m explaining something,” instead of either “Joe, do you think you could be quiet now?” or “Joe, be quiet!”
- The comments should emphasize *I-messages*, which are comments that focus on how the problem behavior is affecting the teacher’s ability to teach, as well as how the behavior makes the teacher feel. They are distinct from *you-messages*, which focus on evaluating the mistake or problem which the student has created. An I-message might be, “Your talking is making it hard for me to remember what I’m trying to say.” A you-message might be, “Your talking is rude.”
- The comments should encourage the student to think about the effects of his or her actions on others—a strategy that in effect encourages the student to consider the ethical implications of the actions (Gibbs, 2003). Instead of simply saying, “When you cut in line ahead of the other kids, that was not fair to them,” you can try saying, “How do you think the other kids feel when you cut in line ahead of them?”

Step 4: Negotiating a Solution: The steps so far describe ways of interacting that are desirable, but also fairly specific in scope and limited in duration. In themselves they may not be enough when conflict persists over time and develops a number of complications or confusing features. A student may persist, for example, in being late for class, in spite of diverse efforts by the teacher to modify this behavior. Two students may persist in speaking rudely to each other, even though the teacher has mediated this conflict in the past. Or a student may fail to complete homework, time after time. Because these problems develop over time, and because they may involve repeated disagreements between teacher and student, they can eventually become stressful for the teacher, for the student, and for any classmates who may be affected. Their persistence can tempt a teacher simply to announce or dictate a resolution—a decision that may simply leave everyone feeling defeated, including the teacher.

Often in these situations it is better to negotiate a solution, which means systematically discussing options and compromising on one if possible. Negotiation always requires time and effort, though usually not as much as continuing to cope with the original problem, and the results can be beneficial to everyone. A number of experts on conflict resolution have suggested strategies for negotiating with students about persistent problems (Davidson & Wood, 2004). The suggestions vary in detail,

but usually include some combination of the steps we have already discussed above, along with a few others.

- *Decide as accurately as possible what the problem is*—Usually this step involves a lot of the active listening described above.
- *Brainstorm possible solutions, and then consider their effectiveness*—Remember to include students in this step; otherwise you are simply imposing a solution on others, which is not what negotiation is supposed to achieve.
- *Choose a solution, if possible by consensus*—Complete agreement on the choice may not be possible, but strive for it as best you can. Remember that taking a vote may be a democratic, acceptable way to settle differences in many situations. If feelings are running high, however, voting has an ironic by-product: it simply allows individuals to “announce” their differences to each other and therefore maintain the conflict.
- *Pay attention later to how well the solution works*—For many reasons, things may not work out the way you or the students hope or expect, and you may need to renegotiate the solution at a later time.

KEEPING MANAGEMENT ISSUES IN PERSPECTIVE

There are two messages from this chapter. One is that management issues are important, complex, and deserve any teacher's serious attention. The other is that management strategies exist and can reduce, if not eliminate, management problems when and if they occur. We have explained what some of those strategies are—including some intended to prevent problems from happening and others intended to remedy problems if they do occur.

But there is a third message that this chapter cannot convey by itself: that good classroom management is not an end in itself, but a means for creating a climate where learning happens as fully as possible. During the stress of handling problem behaviors, there is sometimes a risk of losing sight of this idea. Quiet listening is never a goal in itself, for example; it is desirable only because (or when) it allows students to hear the teacher's instructions or classmates' spoken comments, or because it allows students to concentrate on their work or assignments better. There may, therefore, actually be moments when quiet listening is not important to achieve, such as during a “free choice” time in an elementary classroom or during a period of group work in a middle school classroom. As teachers, we need to keep this perspective firmly in mind. Classroom management should serve students' learning, and not the other way around.

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CHAPTER 6

Learning

Here's a question: Are you teaching if students are not learning? Professionals have debated this idea for generations. I will leave you to ponder this thought. For now, let's look at some basics of learning.

Our brain was designed to question, explore and learn. We are born with billions of neurons just waiting to be connected. Each experience we have, throughout our lifetime, creates connections or pathways between the neurons. Learning begins at birth and continues until the moment we die.

In order for our brains to function effectively, it needs to have the following: exercise, sleep, oxygen, hydration (water), and food. If the brain lacks any of these, the brain will not function at full capacity. Think about students who do not receive enough of one or more of these. They are at a disadvantage from the second they step into the classroom; before instruction even begins. As educators, we have little control over sleep, and oxygen is not a concern unless a child has a lung concern, but we can assist in the remaining needs.

Food and water are basics for life. Allow students the opportunity for a snack. It's not unusual for teachers to have a stash of snacks for students who may not have one. Many elementary schools have a snack time built into the day now, but the older children don't always get this. Fuel is important and you may need to plan for children to have a "nibble" as they are learning. You will also want to encourage children to drink plenty of water during the day. Water is very important for the body to function properly. Keep this in mind for yourself also. Pop, juice and energy drinks are not what the body needs. Be sure to drink lots of water.

Exercise is easier in elementary than secondary classrooms. Most elementary schools have at least one recess in the day. Students should actually have more than one, but if that's what you have then you have to work within that structure. Please don't take recess away from a student! They need to have the opportunity to "burn off steam" and get fresh air and exercise. There is a wide body of research that supports the connection between movement and learning. Children need the time to move. There are also a wide variety of social skills that are learned on the playground. Children learn problem solving and how to enter play. This is a very important social skill. When your day just seems out of control and children are unable to focus, take them outside! It will be the best thing you can do for them and you!

It's a bit tougher for secondary classrooms. You have very limited time, there is no recess planned and you have a lot of content to cover. A simple exercise of having students stand in one place and move their body from side to side, backwards and forwards and then jumping up and down will "jump start" the brain and help them re-focus on what they should be doing. We will talk more about this idea of movement a bit later.



There are three definitions of learning that I want you to know.

1. Learning is a change in the neuron patterns of the brain.
2. Learning is the ability to use information after a long period of disuse.
3. Learning is the ability to use information to problem solve, and/or use it in a different manner or circumstance from which it was learned.

Make note of these! They are important!

Terry Doyle from Ferris State University says that "The one who does the work is the one who does the learning." This is most certainly true! Students have to put work and effort into learning the material that is presented to them. It doesn't just flow into the brain and stay. The type of work and the amount of effort will vary among our students.

They will have to work harder in some areas than others; you probably already know that based on your own learning experiences. As teachers, we have to help students discover what types of strategies will work for them. We'll talk more about that a little later.

As the brain takes in information, it will look for patterns, look for similarities and differences, look for relationships and connect the new information to what is already known. All of these will create new brain connections and can result in learning. The information goes into the short term memory, but in order for learning to take place it has to make the transfer to long term memory. Here is how the cycle works:

The teacher shares knowledge the students need to learn.

The student's short term memory is activated and records information that is important.

Neurons fire creating networks that represent the new information

If the student does not use the information, or only uses it a few times, the neuron-networks that represent that new information will break apart and be lost.

If the information is used a great deal (reviewed, applied and practices), the neuron networks form strong connections and become part of long term memory and then...

LEARNING HAS TAKEN PLACE!

You can see that the student has to be actively involved in order for learning to take place. Our responsibility is helping them develop strategies for making this transfer from short term memory to long term memory.

A very large factor in learning is repetition. Students have to interact with the information over and over. Many of you do not sing your ABCs every day, but if I asked you to do it I bet you could. The reason is that you really did learn it several years ago. The information made the transfer from short term memory to long term memory. Just reading an assignment, or listening to a lecture, is not enough to learn the information. We have to spend time interacting with the material and in a variety of ways.

First off, we have to be certain the information we are trying to learn is accurate. Neurons in the brain fire for misinformation as well as accurate information. If you don't understand an idea, or have questions, be sure to ask them. Do not assume. If you do not ask, you run the risk of studying information that is not correct or of doing something incorrectly. Always be sure the information you are studying is accurate, and that your students understand this idea as well.

Second, students need to take the time to reflect. Ask how the new information connects to what you already know. Search your experiences and see if there is one that connects to this idea. You can use it to help assimilate the new information. Look back over how this information was presented to you and see if there are any connections there that will help you remember. Ponder how you might use this new information. Some students find keeping a reflective journal an effective strategy for them to use when processing new information. A journal is a tool that will allow them to "think about" and reflect on the information. Keep in mind, this may not be effective for everyone.

Another tool for transferring information from the short term memory to the long term memory is review. Our review has to begin immediately. We have to look the information over and create strategies for studying. These will vary greatly among our students. We have to help them discover what learning tools work for them. For example, let's look at learning spelling words. We have all had the list of spelling words we needed to learn. We all had our own way of doing it, but most of us just kept spelling the words over and over. I worked with a third grader who struggled with spelling. I had him draw pictures that made a connection for him. Some of the words he drew pictures for and others he incorporated the word into the picture. This worked for him and his spelling improved. Again, this doesn't work for everyone. Others find flash cards helpful, or drawing graphs and diagrams, writing songs or poems with the concepts to be learned or creating games to play with study buddies. Some students will highlight in their textbooks and write notes in the margins. The bottom line is that students have to find a way to review information that works for them. In some cases, we have to teach our students how to learn.

One review tool is a concept map. You may also know this as a graphic organizer or web. All of these terms refer to basically the same thing. It is a visual organization of material. As they create, they are interacting with the material again (repetition) and then they have a tool to use when they review the information.

Re-coding is a very effective tool in learning. Re-coding involves writing the information you receive in your own words. Taking notes is one way to re-code, as long as you are not copying word for word from a text or power point. Keeping a learning journal is another way to re-code information. Re-coding allows the student to put the ideas in his/her own words and based on our own experiences with the information. This improves learning. Don't memorize definitions; always read the definition and then write it out in your own words. These are the words that you will remember and understand. It will also help to make that transfer of information from the short term memory to the long term memory. Once again, they are interacting with the material a second or third time and we know that repetition is a major key in learning. These are the types of strategies you can teach your students.

Research is showing that movement is an important part of learning. The more movement we can incorporate into a classroom, the more likely our students are to stay focused. This is especially important for younger children who have very limited attention spans, and are naturally wired to move. Students who appear active, or never seem to be able to sit still, are often moving to help keep themselves focused. How many of you doodle while listening to someone talk, or click a pen or tap a foot? This type of "fidgeting", whether you realize it or not, is helping your brain to stay focused on the task. For students who are high in bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, they need to move. However, students are often punished in class for the very behaviors that will help them learn. Technology has also robbed our children of opportunities to move, yet it is a necessary part of our development.

"A child's mental development is based in part on his/her early motor development. The brain begins to wire up its ability to process information by wiring up the body's systems of balance, coordination, vestibular and motor development. What makes us move is also what makes us think. As the brain and body begin to work together to process motor sequences and patterns such as rolling over, crawling, walking and jumping, the brain creates the pathways used for processing sequences in reading and math."

“Movement is the most important thing you do to increase learning. Psychologists and neurologists have been saying for years that what we learn comes through our senses and that we learn through movement. Yet at the age of four, five or six the child is placed in an equivalent of a three-foot cubicle and expected to perform. (Steele, 1976.)”

Think about these things. The basic movements we learn as children, rolling, crawling/walking and jumping correspond with the way information travels in the brain:

- side to side across the corpus callosum
- back to front across the motor cortex
- up and down from the bottom to the top of the brain

Sometimes we have to “jump start” the brain by doing the exercises I mentioned earlier. You can see how those simple movements can help get the brain “talking to itself.”

We can support learning by incorporating movement into our classrooms. Exercise balls have been shown to be very effective for children who have the need to move. The balls are used in place of a chair. The small movement that is need to keep balanced on the ball is enough to meet the child’s need to move. They can also move a bit on the ball within their defined space. Allowing children to doodle or fidget also helps. Some students even benefit from a “fidget.” This is some object that students can “play with” while they are listening, studying and working. For example, a cushy ball to squeeze, or a small ball to roll around in the hand. I use a small spring for my fidget and it goes with me to meetings and workshops, because I need to have some form of movement as I listen and try to focus.

You also want to think about activities you can put into place that will allow students to move. Using a velcro dart board with math facts on is one way to get students moving. They throw the velcro dart and have to solve the problem it lands on. Labeling a beach ball with the elements of a story and tossing the ball around. The elements their hands land on when catching it are the elements they have to explain or give examples of. These type of things will increase the chances that this information will be transferred to long term memory.

There is another significant factor in learning and that is an individual’s mindset. Carol Dweck’s research identified two types of mindsets: a growth mindset and a fixed mindset. These mindsets influence how students view themselves as learners and influences the amount of effort they put into their studies.

Growth mindset individuals believe their brains are malleable and intelligence and abilities can be enhanced through hard work and practice. They believe only time will tell how “smart” they are. Fixed mindset individuals see intelligence as fixed; some people are “smart” and others are not “smart.” They believe that no amount of work or study will improve their abilities or increase their knowledge. Both of these mindsets are reflected in the performance of students. Let’s look at these ideas side by side.

GROWTH MINDSET

Intelligence can be changed
See failure as something to grow from
Practice and effort will improve abilities
Risks are necessary for growth
Effort is necessary for growth and success
Individuals know they can improve
Take criticism as a way to learn and grow
Learning is paramount!

FIXED MINDSET

Intelligence is fixed and unchanging
Putting in effort won’t make a difference
View themselves as “not smart”
Avoid challenges
Make excuses and avoid difficulties
Believe it’s important to “look smart”
Take criticism personally

You can see how the way in which you view yourself will impact your ideas about learning and thus your practices. It’s vital that we help students develop a growth mindset if they are going to be successful.

Let’s look at a basic principle of learning. In order to learn we have to take a risk and in order to take that risk we have to feel safe both physically and emotionally. Most of our students feel physically safe in their classrooms (there are always those exceptions), but far fewer feel emotionally safe. They don’t participate in discussions, answer questions or sometimes even do their work out of the fear of being wrong. Most of these students will have a fixed mindset. They don’t see themselves as learners and they don’t believe that any amount of work will make a difference. They often shut down and do nothing because it is emotionally safer that way. It is safer to do nothing than to do something and be wrong, which means they then deal with the humiliation of failure. They have often experienced a great deal of failure in the past and they have now “shut down.” I have seen this happen over and over with students, some as young as kindergarten. If someone does not

step in and help them experience success, they are doomed. It's never too late to help a student develop a growth mindset, but it will take time, patience and dedication.

If we have any hope of these students into productive students who participate in discussions, complete work and make academic progress we have to first help them experience success. This requires a one-on-one conversation to discover the reason why these things are happening. We then have to work to resolve the issues the student has. They may mean we provide extra help to the student individually, alter assignments for a period of time, work with study buddies, or whatever it will take for the student to experience just a small amount of success. With each new success comes more confidence. We then continue to build on that success. We have to continue to challenge them, but keep the support systems in place so they can continue to be successful. Over time we will be able to remove some of those supports, but in the process they will be gaining strategies and tools they can continue to use in their academic endeavors. They will also have gained confidence and most of them will have changed their mindset to one that more closely resembles a growth mindset. This will make all the difference in their learning!

Learning is a complex process and we have to understand what is involved, what works for our students, the challenges they face, the emotional baggage they enter our classrooms with, as well as understand them and find ways to help them be successful. We have to be willing to go above and beyond, change the rules and expectations now and then, and get rid of the notion of punishment and strive to teach!

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CHAPTER 7

Curriculum and Instruction

CURRICULUM

When we look at curriculum, we must keep instruction in mind. Instruction is the way curriculum is taught. Curriculum focuses on learning goals, (Outcomes, Standards, Benchmarks) while instruction focuses on the “how”, or the way teachers will help students meet these goals. Let’s take a look at curriculum first.

Definitions of Curriculum

- Subject matter taught
- The planned education experiences offered
- Course of study, or systematic arrangement of courses
- **“What teachers teach and what students are expected to learn.”**



Four Types of Curriculum

Explicit Curriculum (Formal)

- Material found in textbooks, teacher’s guides
- Everything that teachers are expected to teach, students are expected to learn and what schools will be held accountable for; material we assess
- Elementary curriculum heavy in language arts and math
- Middle school curriculum content places equal time on all subjects
- Junior High/High School content becomes more compartmentalize

Implicit Curriculum (Informal)

- The “hidden” information
- What children learn from the nature and organization of the school and classrooms and from the attitudes and behaviors of teachers and administrators
- Tolerance
- Study Skills
- Respect
- Organization
- Team Work
- Values
- These are learned from the way classrooms are set up, the practices used, behaviors modeled, the way material is presented, values and priorities that may be unstated, but are evident

Null Curriculum

- Topics left out of a course of study
- Sometimes what we don't say or don't teach, carries as strong, or stronger message than what we do teach
- BE CAREFUL!

Extra-Curricular

- Learning beyond formal studies
- No academic credit
- Extra-curricular activities are part of an effective school
- Need to reach everyone; high and low achievers; all income levels
- May be sports or clubs, organizations

Influences on Curriculum

- Education philosophies
- Textbooks
- Federal/State Government
- Local School District/School Board
- Standards and Testing

Standards: pre-determined statement of what students should know and skills they should have upon completion of an area of study. In Michigan, our standards are based on the Common Core Standards.

In 2010, Michigan adopted the “Common Core Standards”. These are the standards that must be met for each grade level and subject matter. You can find these at the [Michigan Department of Education's website](#). This is the curriculum teachers must follow. They are required to present these concepts and skills to their students. However, the way in which they present and teach this information is entirely up to them. This is where instruction comes into play. A teacher has the *Academic Freedom* to structure his/her classroom and learning activities in the manner they feel best in order to present curriculum to their students and help them master it.

We know every student is different and we need to try and “reach” every student. The choice of teaching methods you use will depend on your students and the material to be taught. Always consider what will be the best way for your students to receive and process the information. Keep the Multiple Intelligences Theory in mind and look for ways to present curriculum that will tap into a variety of intelligences.

We all have recognized that our students will be unique and each will have their own interests, needs, abilities and motivation. As educators, we have to find a way to reach all of them and address as many of these issues as we can. Let's look at some of these.

Instruction

While teachers have little to no control over the formal curriculum, they have a wide range of options when it comes to instruction. Instruction refers to the way in which we present curriculum to the students.

As we saw when we looked at education philosophies, our instruction can learn towards student-centered or teacher-centered. Let's look at each of these.

Teacher Centered

- Teacher is responsible for planning learning activities.
- Passive; students sit and listen as students talk “at” them. (Direct Instruction)
- Teacher creates all of the guidelines for both behavior and work done in the classroom,
- Classroom organization is determined by the teacher.

- All learning goals are determined by the teacher.

Student-Centered Instruction

- Students have input into learning activities.
- Instruction and learning activities are tailored to meet students learning needs and interests.
- Students have input into classroom guidelines and organization .
- Students are also able to set learning goals for themselves in conjunction with learning goals set by the teacher.

Our goal is to help students learn, and we have to find the strategies that work best for our students. A combination of teacher-centered and student-centered seems to work well in many classrooms. Remember that students have a developmental need to have control over themselves and their world, thus giving them the power to make decisions regarding their learning increases motivation, focus and further helps to develop a love of learning.

One instructional strategy which has supported many teachers in their efforts to meet the learning needs of students is “Differentiated Instruction.” While it takes some work in the beginning, once you have a “toolbox” of activities and lessons, it is much easier to implement.

Differentiated Instruction refers to our use of a variety of teaching strategies in order to deliver information to our students. It also means using a variety of different activities to help reinforce that information. We may use direct instruction, we may have them watch a video, we may have them create a project or conduct an experiment. The idea is that we vary our teaching strategies in order to meet the needs of our students.

In differentiated instruction, we can also vary the products we expect from our students. If you keep in mind the idea of multiple intelligences, you know that many of us excel in some areas and these would be the areas that where we would most likely be able to create a product that would best demonstrate our learning. For example, you have recently studied the Battle of Gettysburg and the students have to do a project that will reflect their learning. Many of us probably wrote the boring report that had to be three pages, etc. and many of us also probably struggled with that. The written report is only one way to look at student learning. Why not offer more choices? For the musical individual, have them write a song that reflects the major issues of this battle, or how about create a newscast as if the student was a reporter on the scene and they were broadcasting the events. (I know TV and radio weren't around then, but expand your thinking a bit.) 😊 Could the student build the battle field and include facts on cards or included in some other way? They could write a R.A.F.T. (We will talk about this soon.) They would have to choose a role to write from, for example a soldier or general. They choose an audience and format, maybe they are writing a letter home to family, and then they discuss the battle. In this letter you would be able to see what the student has learned about this battle. The whole idea is that we give students various ways to present their knowledge. We will gain much richer information in regards to what they have learned and they will be more engaged and motivated in the learning activity.

Areas to Differentiate

- Content (What students learn.)
- Process (How students learn it.)
- Products (What students produce.)
- Learning Environment/ Affect (Environment in which they learn.)
- Assessment (Evidence we use to determine what students are learning.)

Along with varying our instruction and student's products, we also vary our assessments. So many teachers are “hung up” on tests and they are not the best way to assess. Many of these “products” you ask students to produce can be used as assessments. Using these will also be a more accurate measure, in many cases, of what a student has learned over a written test you may give them.

Planning for Instruction

When we plan classroom activities, we want to follow a strategy called, “*Backward Design*”. When we follow this practice, we begin our planning with the standard we are teaching, in other words, what we want the students to learn. We then plan how we will assess that learning, and finally plan the learning activities for this particular concept. Simply put:

1. Identify desired results (Standard)

2. Determine acceptable evidence (Assessment)

3. Plan learning experiences and instruction

When objectives, learning activities and assessments relate directly to standards, we have “*Instructional Alignment*”. All of our lessons should be instructionally aligned.

Let’s look at various strategies for instruction. Some strategies are better suited to the content being taught than others. Varying the strategies you use will keep students engaged, interested, and increase the potential for learning.

Learning Centers: Areas set up in the classroom with learning activities directed at a specific concept. Learning centers can be set up to reinforce skills previously learned, or to help students internalize new concepts. For example, the learning centers could be used to “fill in” when students have idle time. If they are finished with work, they can go to the centers and work with concepts they have previously been exposed to. You may have a science center, a creative art center, and maybe a language center. You can rotate activities, thus giving students more exposure to concepts being taught, as well as helping to engage students in a time of the day when idle hands could cause behavior concerns.

The other way learning centers can be used is to teach a concept. For example, if you wanted to teach the concepts of magnets you would have a variety of centers set up all dealing with magnets. Students would move from center to center, engaging in the planned activities. You would want to try and design the activities at the centers to tap into the various multiple intelligences.

RAFT: Role, Audience, Format, Topic

This is a writing strategy that allows for student creativity. It can be used in a variety of ways, including as an assessment.

ROLE: Students choose a perspective to write from.

AUDIENCE: Students choose who they are writing to.

FORMAT: Students choose the format for writing: letter, memo, poem, advertising ad, etc.

TOPIC: The topic they are writing on.

Here is an example that could be used:

Role: Abraham Lincoln

Audience: American People

Format: Interview

Topic: The major challenges of his presidency

In this activity, the students would have to decide what the major challenges were in his presidency and be able to explain those. The student would also design the questions that could be used in the interview in regards to these challenges. For some students, this would be a more engaging and interesting way to report on these versus just writing a 1000 word essay. You will probably get more information from the student as well.

Choice Boards

- Students choose from a menu of options
- Tasks vary by process and interest
- Some anchor activities can be required of all students
- Can be used for homework, projects, and assessment, or as again, a way to fill idle time.

Here is an example that could be used for learning what verbs are:

Choose a book from the reading area and write down 10 verbs	Create a song using five verbs
Choose five verbs and illustrate them	Write a short story and identify the verbs in the story
Listen to a favorite song and identify the verbs	Draw a picture and write a short description of what is happening using at least three verbs

These are all activities that would help reinforce the idea of verbs. Students would be able to choose which of these they would like to do. This example has six, but many are made with nine choices. Teachers can determine how many activities students have to complete. The *Tic-Tac-Toe* choice board is set up with nine choices and students have to do three that will form a tic-tac-toe. I have even seen teachers give extra credit if students do them all, or in Bingo terms, a “cover all”. As I stated, Choice Boards can also be used to fill in for idle moments and review a variety of concepts that are being learned. Here is an example for older students:

Create a Venn Diagram comparing yourself and a character in [To Kill a Mockingbird](#)

Illustrate a book cover for a favorite book

Create a comic strip with seven frames that shows how the Earth's surface has changed.

Complete the "President Map" which shows the qualifications to be President, as well as the roles of the President.

Create a game that will teach a concept from class, but requires movement

Describe 10 occupations that incorporate area, surface area, or volume. Be very specific on the job title and explain how that job uses area, SA, or volume. At least 3 sentences each.

Choice Boards give students some control over the activities you do, yet you have chosen the activities. Always be open, however, to the student who comes to you with an idea for an activity. Sometimes students have great ideas!

Cooperative Learning

- Small groups
- The group has a common goal.
- All have a responsibility in the group and all are accountable.

Discovery Based Learning

- Environment is set up, students make discoveries through their interactions
 - Setting up learning centers for children to discover how magnets work

Problem Based Learning

- Students are given a problem to solve

Jigsaw

- Groups are formed to discuss topic
- Groups are re-divided so each new group has one member from the first groups
 - Example: The topic being taught is "Reasons for the Revolutionary War"
 - Each group is given one reason to research and create a fact sheet on
 - Groups are re-divided so each new group has a person from the previous groups and each member reports out to the group the particular reason they researched.

Think-Pair-Share

- Students are given a topic to think about.
- Students then pair up and discuss the topic
- The students share their thoughts with the class.

Reading Buddies

- Pair students to read material and complete assignment

Web Quest

- Web based with a variety of activities

Cubing

- Pre-writing strategy; look at topic from a variety of angles
- Example: Who, What, Where, When, Why and Impact

K-W-L: Know, Want to know, Learned

- When beginning a unit of study, list all the things you KNOW about the topic.



- Next, create a list of things you WANT to know about this topic.
- After the unit of study is done, create a list of what has been LEARNED.

A K-W-L can be done as a class, or each student can create their own. There are benefits to both and your learning goals will determine which one you may use.

Responding to students who answer correctly

- Be supportive!!
- If correct, acknowledge, provide quick praise, acknowledge any strategy used in discovering the answer:
"You are right. The answer is 16. Nice adding. I'm glad you used the counters."

- If correct but student is hesitant, acknowledge answer and repeat question:
"Yes, 3×5 does equal 15."

This reinforces the information and gives positive acknowledgement of the answer. For students who are in the class and were uncertain of the answer, this reaffirms the correct answer.

Responding to students who answer incorrectly

- If incorrect, acknowledge their willingness to take the risk, inform them of the incorrect answer and help them discover the correct one:

"I'm glad you tried this. Trying is an important part of learning, but your answer is not correct. Let's look at this together and find the answer. You have the problem $2+8$ and you answered 11. That is incorrect. First we have the number 2, so what do you need to do? Good. Now we have 8; what will you do? Good. What's next? OK, count all of the markers. Yes! Now you've got it! $2+8$ equals 10. Let's try the same strategy with another problem."

- Be sure to answer in a non-threatening manner.
- This gives them strategies to use in the future.
- Demonstrates your support and willingness to help.
- Builds confidence, sense of security, and a willingness to try.

Students who do not respond

- They may be afraid to answer out of fear of getting it wrong.
- They are uncertain of what you're asking.
- You have given unclear directions.
- Consider, did you ask only one question at a time? If you ask more than one at once, they don't know which to answer.
- Have you used appropriate vocabulary they understand?
- Students may be uncertain where to start.

You may have to walk students through the process or give them tips on completing a task. If you ask questions and no one responds, look closely at what you have asked, and how you have asked it.

Always remember, **ALL STUDENTS CAN LEARN!!** However, what they learn, how they learn it and the pace at which they learn it will vary. Under the differentiated instruction idea, we are changing our instruction, our expectations and our assessments based on the needs and interests of the students.

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CHAPTER 8

Assessment

There are many feelings that are invoked when people hear the word “assessment”. Many will jump to the standardized tests that our children are required to take. For others, the only form of assessment they are familiar with, or feel are appropriate are tests. Before we talk about various forms of assessment, let’s look at why we use assessments in the classroom.

Assessments are used for a variety of purposes:

- Monitor students’ progress in learning
- Make instructional decisions
- Evaluate student achievement
- Evaluate and make program and learning decisions

It’s important to understand why we should assess our students, and it doesn’t have to do with school funding or “good” standings in the state. It has to do with supporting students and the learning process.

We want to assess children’s knowledge in order to discover where their strengths lie, as well as where they need more support. The next piece, and a very important part of assessment, is to then take that knowledge and make a plan for further learning. It may mean that a student needs to be challenged more in an area, or needs additional time working on that particular skill. We then make those plans for the student. Here is another area where Differentiated Instruction comes into play. We may have various students working on different activities based on the assessment results.



For some, the only form of assessment that seems appropriate is a test. This, however, is not the only form of assessment. Tests are one of the least effective ways to assess learning. Real life activities, projects, and other classroom activities can be used for assessment. Remember the Fact Sheets in the Jigsaw example, or the RAFT example mentioned in the previous chapter? Both of these could be used to assess the students’ learning on these topics. You will probably also get a more accurate picture of their learning than from a test of any kind. Consider looking at forms of assessment that are not tests.

We know our students will be required to take standardized tests to measure learning. In Michigan, our students take the M-Step test. “All of Michigan’s state assessments measure student progress with Michigan’s content standards or other career- or college-readiness goals. The Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) is given online to students in grades 3-8 and

measures current student knowledge of Michigan’s high academic standards in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies.

High school students in grades 9 and 10 take the PSAT, to inform schools, students, and parents on what students know in ELA and mathematics, and help prepare students for the SAT college entrance exam given to every high school junior as part of the Michigan Merit Examination (MME). The MME consists of a free SAT with essay that also measures student knowledge on state ELA and mathematics standards, M-STEP science and social studies components, and a work skills assessment called ACT WorkKeys.” (All of Michigan’s state assessments measure student progress with Michigan’s content standards or other career- or college-readiness goals. The Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) is given online to students in grades 3-8 and measures current student knowledge of Michigan’s high academic standards in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies.

In some areas of the country, high stakes tests are given. “*High Stakes Tests*” are tests that have a significant impact on the student. For example, some states require students to take a test at the end of each grade and they cannot move to the next unless they pass it. The new reading law in Michigan is an example of a High Stakes Test.

As our purpose for assessment is to help students learn, a vital part of this is feedback. Students need timely, and specific feedback on the work they perform. When they take a test, they need to receive it back quickly and have comments made so

students know where they went “wrong”. We can let them know where they can find the correct information and have them look up the right answers for additional points. Other assignments should have information as to what was done well, as well as where improvements can be made. This is how students learn from their mistakes, and it is an essential part of the learning process.

As I said earlier, feedback needs to be given in a timely manner. Returning work to students two, three, weeks after it was performed serves little purpose to students. They have lost interest in the assignment and are no longer vested; they have moved on. Try to return work within a couple days, while students are still interested in what they did. They are more likely then to go back and look up information, or re-do assignments.

Consider letting students re-do assignments when appropriate. If a student has not performed as you think they are able to, or with some additional information they may be able to learn more, give them the opportunity to do so. Not every assignment will lend itself to this sort of thing, but students can often gain more information and increase learning when they have the chance to see their mistakes, and go back and re-do an assignment. This is also a practice that will help to develop a Growth mindset.

Assessment is a necessary part of the learning process. Be sure you are using the appropriate types of assessments for your students and think beyond the traditional tests. Look at the performance of your students and use that information to plan future learning experiences for your students. Keep an open mind, be willing to try new ideas, and be willing to give students input into their assessment as well. Provide timely feedback on their work so they can further their learning. The effectiveness of assessment is based on how it is implemented by the teacher.

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CHAPTER 9

Looking to the Future

Over the past weeks we have looked at various aspects of teaching and learning. I know many of the ideas presented were new to some of you. I thank you for keeping an open mind and looking at things from a different angle. Your text has information on beginning this journey, but I want to share my personal thoughts with you; my “words of wisdom” if you will.

First of all, always keep an open mind and be willing to try new things. There is always more than one side to any story; be sure to consider them all! Seek out new information, try new strategies and “boldly go where no “man” has gone before!” Some of my most enlightening moments have come from the acquisition of new knowledge, knowledge I sought out on my own.

I also mentioned being willing to change your practices. Continually reflect on what you do and question if it can be done more effectively. Be willing to try new ideas. What works for one group of students today may not work tomorrow, or even next year. Try new things and re-visit old ones. Everything can be “tweaked” or tossed out if need be, but be willing to try! Do not get stuck in the rut of doing the same things over and over. You will become bored and lose your enthusiasm for teaching. You’re in trouble if that happens! Some of our biggest failures can be springboards for some of our greatest lessons. Don’t be quick to dismiss the failed idea, or even a new idea. You may have to try something more than once before you find the way that works for you and your students.

Avoid judging your students. It’s very easy to do, but it can have a negative impact on their learning. These judgments may cause you to make decisions that are inappropriate for your students and may compromise their learning.

Along with judgments, avoid assumptions. Again, your assumptions may be wrong and lead to decisions that do not support learning for the students in your classroom. Assumptions are often based on our own experiences and no two people experience things exactly the same way.

One way to avoid judgments and assumptions is to talk with students. Take the time to engage in conversations and get to know your students, not just as students, but as people also. Knowing your students will help you form a respectful and trusting relationship. It will let students know you honestly do care about them, not just their grades. This relationship can do amazing things when it comes to student motivation. Think about those teachers you described weeks ago. Most of you spoke about the relationship you had with them and how that was a major factor in your performance and how you viewed learning. You want to be that teacher that students will tell others about one day; a day when they are long gone from your classroom.

An area I really ask you to keep an open mind on is in the area of discipline and negative behaviors in the classroom. Once again, talk with students and try to find out the cause for some of the behaviors you will see. If we can eliminate the cause, or the trigger, we can eliminate the behavior. Remember that negative behaviors can be a way to “cover up” for a lack in skills. If students do not feel they have the skills to do the work, they may act out. It is psychologically safer to deal with whatever punishment may be given for their behavior, than it is to deal with the humiliation and embarrassment that can come from not being able to do the work. These are the students we have to really reach out to! We have to find a way to help them experience success, building both confidence and skills, and we can eliminate some of those negative behaviors.

Also keep in mind that not all students, no matter how old they are, will have been taught appropriate manners and behaviors. We may be the ones who have to teach them some of the social skills that we assume (There’s that word!) they should know. Don’t make that assumption and don’t hold the student responsible for something they may not have been taught; just help them learn what is acceptable.

Another element in forming that positive relationship with students is confidentiality. Keep the confidence of your students. Do not get “caught up” in the teachers’ lounge gossip about students. I have heard countless teachers spouting off about students in their classroom. Teachers who may have the child in the future are already dreading having him/her in their classroom. How unfair to the student! You can bet that student will probably won’t get a fair “shake” and they may have to work doubly hard to have a positive impact on the teacher; if they even care to try. More than that, it’s disrespectful to your students and unprofessional. There is nothing wrong with asking a colleague for ideas when you have a challenging student. There is a difference between going in and saying “I have a student who has difficulty staying on task and is often disruptive. Does anyone have any ideas I could try to help him stay focused?” and saying “Oh, what a morning! Joe Frank is making me nuts! He won’t do his work. He’s constantly daydreaming and I can’t get him to complete his work. I look forward to the days when he isn’t here!” The first approach respectfully protects the identity of your student, as well as helps you gain some new strategies to try. The second approach is both disrespectful and unprofessional. Some of you may already have witnessed this in the teachers’ lounge and it’s sad. Please don’t ever be one of those teachers who takes their students’ identity and concerns into the lounge for all to hear.

For me, there was never another career option. I never thought of being anything other than a teacher. When I graduated from high school, it was even tougher than it is now to get a teaching position. Family and friends tried to get me to go into nursing, but there was no way I could do that! I took my chances. While my career path did not go as I expected it to, I would not change any of it! If I had not had the experiences I did, I would not be a college professor today. This is not a teaching avenue I had ever considered, but when it came my way I felt prepared and ready for a new teaching challenge. If you know that teaching is for you, don't let anyone talk you out of it! You'll never be sorry!

While we have a large responsibility, and much that is expected of us, take the time to enjoy your students. Take moments out to just have fun with them! Sometimes you have to scrap the lessons and just relax and enjoy each other. Your students can enrich your lives in ways you may not be able to imagine right now, and it doesn't matter what age your students are! One downfall to the online class is that I don't have the opportunity to have that fun with all of you. It saddens me actually, but it is one of the trade-offs that I accept. When you have the chance, step back and just have a little fun!

I wish all of you the very best! I hope you all find the position you are looking for and enjoy this profession as much as I have. While it is challenging, frustrating, infuriating and physically and mentally tasking, it is also one of the most exhilarating, rewarding, exciting, fun, challenging and fulfilling experiences there is!

Now to a few realities for the future. If you have not done so, you need to sit down with an advisor from the school you want to go to. You need to have a plan mapped out so that you are taking the appropriate courses here that will allow you to transfer right into their program. You don't want to waste time and money, or find out that you don't have the right classes.



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