



2012 HAWAII UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES
EDUCATION, MATH & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY
JULY 31ST TO AUGUST 2ND
WAIKIKI BEACH MARRIOTT RESORT & SPA
HONOLULU, HAWAII

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT 101 – ONLINE SUPPORT FOR NOVICE TEACHERS: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

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Technology can wear many hats in the learning/teaching environment. It can be supplemental in nature as well as be the basis for the learning taking place. It can even serve as an outlet for meeting rather than in a traditional classroom. Technology can open the world to the students. Likewise, it can also be a hindrance in some educational settings when used improperly. Technology – of any form – is novel and interesting to most students and can be a bit frightening to others. Due to its unique and flexible nature technology has and will continue to bring education to new fronts, new worlds, and new learning opportunities.

It seems that the use of podcasts and blogs could be made very effective in fitting within current school curriculum. Rather than turning a written paper have the student give the same responses as they would in a paper in a podcast instead. Likewise, a blog can be used to journal students' thoughts on readings and activities done in and for the class. At certain schooling levels, technology is a major part of the TEKS and integrating the use of various technologies into the regular curriculum allows teachers to accomplish two tasks at once. The use of podcasts and blogs can be a lesson in and of themselves or can easily be integrated into various curricula as parts of an assignment. Either way, the use of the podcasting/blogging technology can be an excellent tool to allow students to express themselves in a medium in which they may find more comfort than a written task.

Teachers need to have access to a computer and the internet and must be comfortable enough to maneuver through websites. Further, with regards

to the information within the podcasts, teachers need to have a sense of what classroom management is and a general idea of how they would like to run their classroom. The purpose of my podcasts was to provide tips to pre-service and novice teachers rather than teach the various foundations of management. By use of the blogging/commenting tool it is my hope that this will allow more collaboration and interaction of thoughts and suggestions by the teachers.

The design of this project initially was that pre-service and novice teachers would simply interact with the podcasts and blogs to get the information they desired. However, I do believe through the use of the blog and comments that more interaction can be created by allowing others to share their thoughts, ideas, questions, etc. The podcasts tend to be a bit more linear in interaction in that the user is simply listening to them. However, when adding in the blogging/commenting element more collaboration is offered.

The first and perhaps the most obvious assumption made in choosing to use a podcast and blog style site to share my thoughts on classroom management is that those interested feel comfortable enough to access the internet and play the podcast – or are even aware of what a podcast or blog actually is. Likewise, I assumed that pre-service and novice teachers use the internet as a searching tool to gain knowledge in subjects such as classroom management rather than strictly relying on observations and experiences.

Podcast/Blog Scripts

1. First day of school

- When parents walk through the door with their child at their side they are

thinking one thing – will this teacher care for my child, will he/she nurture my child, will he/she protect my child, will he/she teach my child all he needs to know and more? The smile on your face, the tone in your voice, and your body language all serve as your business card. With one meeting, one smile, one handshake you have the power to put parents and students at ease. These first meetings and first days of school liken themselves to an audition. Both parents and students are determining what role of a teacher you will play. The most important thing you can do is smile, introduce yourself to both the parents and child shaking hands, and above all be kind and professional. After meeting your students and their parents it is important to begin the first day of school on a positive note. Your students will be anxious and maybe even a little afraid. It is your job to put them at ease. An easy way to do this is by reading a book to your class. One of my favorites for younger children is If you Take a Mouse to School by Laura J. Numeroff. The students love this story and it is easy for them to follow. Another great story for older students is The First Day Jitters by Juile Danneberg. This book offers the idea that even teachers are nervous on the first day of school. Throughout the first day of school your students will be looking to you for every clue about how their school year will be. Your best bet is to remain calm, organized, and sure of yourself. Gently let them know that you are the “boss” in the room, but also that your classroom is its own family. On the first day of school you are setting the mood and pace for the rest of the year. Be purposeful about what you say

and do and try to keep a smile on your face!

2. How to Manage a Management system

-There is a wide variety of management systems available to you as a teacher.

In some cases schools or districts have their own system set up for you.

Whether using color changes, color cards, tokens, checks, tallies or any other

system there is one factor that remains true to all of them – consistency. No

matter what your rules, consequences, rewards programs are the most

important thing is to use them consistently. In my classroom I used a color

change stick. This was made by using a yard stick and painting it in sections

of color using clothespins with students' names on them. One-fourth of my

stick was painted green and students began everyday on this section. If a

student broke a rule they were required to move their clothespin down one

section to yellow – which didn't have any direct consequences. The remaining

sections had a consequence attached to having to move your clothespin to that

section. Next was red which caused a 5 minute loss of a certain privilege.

Then blue which is a 10 minute loss and note home. Last was orange which

resulted in a 15 minute loss of privilege or time out and a note or phone call

home. The color change stick was only used as a negative form of behavior

management. It is important that if you use a negative behavior management

system you also need to have a positive management system in place. In my

class I used a token style system where students earned popsicle sticks for

positive behaviors. They kept track of their sticks and were allowed to trade

them in for various rewards. I think it is important to note that I never took away their popsicle sticks for negative behaviors. Whatever management system you chose consistency is and always will be the key. Children know and learn quickly who can get away with what and who will get rewarded for what. Whenever you begin planning your management system repeat to yourself...consistency, consistency, consistency!

3. Rules and Consequences and Rewards, Oh My

-There are many schools of thought on how class rules should be established. Some believe that rules should be passed down by the teacher. Others believe that rules should be developed by the students. Still others feel rules should be developed by the current class of students for next year's class. No matter how you choose to develop your rules it is important to relay your rules to your students in terms meaningful to them. When teaching your students the rules, consequences, and rewards of the classroom it is vital that you use kid-friendly terms and model what the rule may look like being broken. Discuss what the consequences mean providing examples for students to help them understand better. When looking at your rewards program you need to be diligent in showing students what you want them to do in order to earn a reward. More than anything when discussing rules, consequences and rewards with your class they need to be personalized and taught not just told.

4. Procedures and Routines, Step 1, Step 2, Step 3...

-When all else fails, try and try again. Teaching a procedure to a class is a

difficult task. It is very important to break the activity (whatever you wish to teach) into small manageable steps for the students. It is most easy to tell the student the first step, have them repeat it, show them how to do it, then have them complete the first step several times. Once the entire class can do the first step correctly and on cue it is time to move to the next step and repeat the process. Tell it, Repeat it, show it, do it...over and over again. When the students are completing each step they must do it correctly at least twice. Now that the students have learned steps 1 and 2 it is time to combine them and practice. I know this may seem like a grueling task, but once a procedure is learned and becomes automatic it turns into a routine and routines cut down on half of the instructions given and time wasted in a classroom. So, to provide an example....taking a trip to the library. First, you must teach your class how you expect them to line up by teaching them one step at a time. Once the class can line up in a manner that you have established you explain that we are going to take a trip to the library. Next, you need to explain and model your expectations for their behavior in the hallway. Once students understand and can demonstrate your expectations they are ready to go. Line the class up and set forth for the library. If you have established that students must be quiet in the hallway then that is what needs to happen. As soon as one student talks, whispers, or giggles it is important to turn the class around, return to the classroom and start the process over again. Every time a student breaks an expectation it is important to start over again. After a while the students will be so tired of turning around and going back to the classroom

that they will comply and meet your expectations. This also proves that you mean business and will not accept less than what you expect. So, to repeat, when all else fails, try and try again...or teach and teach again!

5. The Expectations High-Jump

-Don't be afraid to set high expectations for your students. It is quite amazing what children can do if given the opportunity, support, and motivation. It is a proven concept that if you set low expectations for students you will get what you asked for – but likely won't be pleased with the results. Likewise, if you set obtainable, high expectations for your students there is a chance that they will reach those expectations. While setting high expectations is important it is also important to teach your students how to reach these expectations. You can't expect a teenager to manage his/her money on their own. You must show them, teach them, and guide them in how to manage money appropriately. Similarly, if you expect your students to have exceptional behavior when there is a substitute teacher in the room, you need to teach them what exceptional behavior looks like and what will happen if they do or do not meet this expectation. Don't be afraid to expect a lot of your students just be prepared to teach them how to meet your expectations.

6. Don't Smile till Christmas

-We have all heard it said in regards to classroom management “don't smile till Christmas”. While with a few kids this saying has merit for the classroom as a whole this is a terrible idea. Your students need to know that you value education and are excited about learning and their experiences. If you are not

happy – your students will know and this will affect their behavior. Now, I am not saying jump up and down and smile like a clown, but find a way to let your students know how important their education is to you and how important they are to you. In August I met my students at the door on the first day of school grinning ear-to-ear. In May I led them out the door faking a smile, but really knowing how much I was going to miss them. Smile for your kids – enjoy your job and they will enjoy theirs.

7. A Job for Everyone

-An easy tool to help you manage your classroom is to assign jobs to your students. This teaches them a sense of responsibility as well as helps them take ownership of their classroom. Jobs can be as simple as turning off the lights when the class leaves the classroom to as complex as taking roll or the lunch count for the cafeteria. Research has shown that by giving students a job within the classroom helps them develop a feeling of duty and job ownership. I have found that in the younger grades it is beneficial to have a job for every student to do and change these jobs once a week whereas older students can handle having jobs rotate through faster. The lesson of responsibility is a difficult task to teach, but if done so through student jobs it can be made much easier. If you are interested in jobs for students look at the Classroom Management 101 Blog at ahanna.edublogs.org you can find a list of suggested jobs for students.

8. Classroom Disruptions – How to Ignore a Tapping Tyrant

-They are annoying, they are irritating, they are inevitable...classroom

disruptions are a constant in every classroom. Whether it be a phone call, a fire drill, a neighboring teacher, or a tapping tyrant classroom disruptions cause the flow of your teaching or lesson to be interrupted. In such cases it is important to have a game-plan and to share this plan with your students. For instance, when I had an unexpected phone call come in my students knew that I expected them to stay in their seats and either continue with their work or read a book while I finished the phone call. This way, my students were not given an opportunity to interrupt the phone call unless there was an emergency. Besides the regularly scheduled fire drills my class had our own “drills” at the beginning of the year so that they knew more of what to expect and what I wanted them to do. When returning in from a fire drill or any other disruption it is necessary to refocus your class on the learning at hand. This can be done in a variety of ways. The easiest is to have the students state what the learning or lesson taking place is or ask them a series of questions that can pull their attention back to the activity. Other disruptions such as the tapping tyrant, who no matter how many “wait a minute” fingers you hold up to him continues to tap on you and call your name. The easiest way to address this is to develop a “wait a minute” signal that the child knows. Along with this, you need to explain that interrupting is okay only in an emergency and what an emergency consists of. My students knew that in any case if I held up my hand or a small stop sign I made that they were to either take a seat and wait, write their question down on a sticky note, or ask a neighbor. No matter what the disruption – a tip to save yourself some time...make a plan and stick to it!

9. Signals – Red Means Stop; Green Means Go

-Signals are one of the most commonly used and abused tools a teacher has in her classroom management tool box. Having a signal in a classroom is a very useful way of letting students know what you would like them to do in a fun, easy way. Signals can be as simple as ringing a bell to get the class' attention to playing a song that cues the students to perform a task such as lining up. Depending on the age of the students you can have several signals meaning several instructions. It is important, as with any other procedure that you teach your students directly what you expect them to do at the sounding of the signal. Signals are also a very useful tool in the case of emergencies, disruptions, or transitions. There is a plethora of signals available to use a teacher. Starting with those simply made by you such as saying "Give Me 5" signals for the students to raise their hand and locate you in the room and give you their attention. Likewise, a rain stick, bell, or noise maker of any sort can serve as a signal. I have even witnessed teachers using songs to gain their student's attention. In my classroom I employed a variety of signals such as stating "Code Q" (the Q means quiet) which cued my students to immediately stop what they were doing, empty their hands, and put their heads down. I used this in the case of major disruptions or emergencies. I also used a castanet that was painted like a ladybug. When I clicked the castanet my students knew to stop what they were doing, find me in the room, and put antenna using their fingers on their heads. By doing this I assured that their hands were empty and their eyes were on me. During the winter months I

used a stuffed singing snowman that when played signaled my students to line up. My class never lined up as fast and orderly as they did when I used this signal. As I stated earlier signals can also be abused by being overused or having too many. Students tend to get used to these signals so sometimes it is important to change them out. A signal is useful, fun, and easy to use and a great classroom tool. Feel free to look at the Classroom Management 101 Blog to see a list of more signals.

10. Welcome Back – It all Starts Again in January

-By December it will seem as though your classroom management has been honed to a fine art, but come the nearing of the Christmas holidays you will likely notice your reliance on your management tools even more as the children become anxious. It is vital that when your students return to school in January that you treat your classroom management tools much like you did back in August. In other words you start from the beginning re-teaching rules, procedures, consequences, signals, rewards, etc. This should take less time, but will certainly help you and your students as you transition into the Spring Semester. Just remember, students are kids and must be taught exactly that which you wish them to do. Save yourself sometime in the long run and invest your time early in teaching your students all the various forms of classroom management that you will use to make your classroom your family!

The first and perhaps the most obvious assumption made in choosing to use a podcast and blog style site to share my thoughts on classroom

management is that those interested feel comfortable enough to access the internet and play the podcast – or are even aware of what a podcast or blog actually is. Likewise, I assumed that pre-service and novice teachers use the internet as a searching tool to gain knowledge in subjects such as classroom management rather than strictly relying on observations and experiences. The overall goal of this concept is to bring veteran and novice teachers together in a forum of learning and sharing as they establish classroom management routines and procedures. With management being cited for the primary cause of teacher attrition, offering more support to pre-service and novice teachers may allow for more success and retention of outstanding teachers.