

Elementary Education Philosophy Paper for EDU 301

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Over the course of this semester we have been reading the book called *The First Days of School* by Harry and Rosemary Wong, and it has helped me understand what it truly means to be in control of a classroom and have it organized and ready for students to learn in. Throughout this course, I have learned that the way I plan is very important and what I plan for can help shape how my class functions and the way the school year will go. During this semester, three main topics that we have talked about are policies, procedures, and discipline in the classroom. Yet I have also learned that sometimes these things can start outside the classroom in order to make the inside of the classroom a better place to learn. I want to go into further detail about a couple of strategies throughout this paper that I think are the changing factors of what a great classroom can be.

Classroom Policies

Classroom policies are strategies to help keep the classroom a learning environment for all students. Policies I believe are things that can be posted somewhere in the classroom to help remind students to stay on task and be focused on their work. In my classroom, policies would be expectations of things the students would need to follow in the classroom. Expectations can be things like, getting homework in on time, or respecting other people when they are talking. Policies are like the rules of the classroom, but they are not just general. They are specific to each classroom. As mentioned in the book *The First Days of School*, “Specific rules focus on

particular behaviors.”¹ When you have specific rules for students to follow, they know exactly what is expected of them and it leaves nothing up to question. In my classroom I would have no more than 5 policies because in the book *The First Days of School*, it mentions that it is easier to remember smaller amounts. These policies would be standards of the classroom that are expected of the students to follow and pay attention to.

One of the policies I would implement in my classroom is to respect in three ways: respect themselves, respect others, respect property. This would allow the students to be responsible for their own actions and learn to treat others properly. Another policy that I would have in the classroom is the expectation of trying to problem solve without the help of the teacher first, and then if the student is not able to figure it out the last resort is to go to the teacher. I would call it the i2T, look at the instructions again, ask 2 buddies to help you first, then consult the teacher. I would have this posted on a piece of paper where all the students can see it and I would be sure to go over this policy in the first couple of weeks of school (in appendix A I put a copy of what this policy would look like). This way the students will know what is expected of them right away.

During this semester we watched a video by Chelonnda Seroyer which helped to define that policies are to help the students to be responsible and on time to class. This responsibility can help the students take their learning into their own hands and know that they have put in the

¹ Wong, H. K., Wong, R. T., & Martínez, W. (2018). *The first days of school: How to be an effective teacher*. Mountain View, CA: Harry K. Wong Publications.

hard work necessary. When the students know what is expected of them, they are able to take on the responsibility necessary.

Classroom Procedures

Procedures are similar to policies but are more of the step by step process of what is expected of students. Procedures are things that can be practiced multiple times and can become part of the routine of how the class is run. In the video that we watched by Chelonnda Seroyer, she talked about the importance of procedures and that it is important to have a procedure even for when a substitute teacher is in. This really made me reflect and think about how students need to have things laid out for them and they also really appreciate when things are laid out for them. While Mrs. Seroyer was talking, I was also reflecting on one of my classroom experiences in high school, when my history teacher was twenty minutes late. From my experience our class didn't know what to do because we had never been told or taught about what to do if a teacher is late, and there was not a consistent schedule of what happened at the beginning of class. When my history teacher finally came it took a while to get focused and at that point, we didn't take that class period seriously anymore. If my teacher had set in place procedures that helped us understand what to do every day when we came in there wouldn't be any issues if she had to step out of the classroom for a minute or if a sub was late.

For me personally, I enjoy and work well in an environment if there is order, consistency and structure to whatever I am doing. From what Mrs. Seroyer said, it seems that procedures are the thing that communicates having a consistent and comfortable classroom, where the students are able to learn well and know what to do without always being told. Mrs. Seroyer gave an example of a student who was a straight A student but got a boyfriend her senior year and was late one day. Mrs. Seroyer did not make any exceptions for any student. This has helped me see

that if you bend the consistency in any way then your classroom management is going to fall apart. Having consistency and procedures that provide consistency seems to be the key to a successful classroom. In my classroom I hope that these procedures would create an environment for success.

In my own classroom one of the procedures that I would have would be about how to keep the classroom organized so that the students are able to find the materials they need. One way I would have organization is to have boxes labeled and organized on a shelf for students to be able to see what is in each of the bins and know which one they need. Another thing that I would do is to have a specific seating chart that would be able to be changed up and that students would help organized sometimes. These procedures would help the students take responsibility for keeping their environment organized and a workable learning space. This would also help the students feel more at home by being responsible for their spaces and getting to help in they in which items are organized. I have included pictures in appendix B of what my procedures would look like.

Discipline.

In a classroom, dealing with different disciplines can often be difficult. From watching a video on YouTube by Rob Plevin, he gives five great examples of ways that can help settle a classroom down and keep it under control. The video gave great examples of strategies to be used to help calm down a loud classroom. One strategy talked about calming down the class before they get inside the classroom. The strategy is about using non-confrontational statements, which means positive reinforcement to get the class to settle down. Rather than yelling and saying, "stop yelling, or stop running" it is better to say, "thank you Jimmy for standing quietly, thank you Sally for quietly walking and having your voice at a level zero." These types of

comments help reinforce positive behavior which helps the class get ready to enter the classroom. This also helps the teacher become more in control of the class. Another strategy in the video, which was also very intriguing, was about having informal conversation. This can help the students want to listen to you and want to pay attention because when you care to talk to them and care to talk about things they enjoy, they are able to be more welcoming to things you have to say and listen more when they are told to calm down. These strategies for helping calm down a class are great ways to be able to control behavior in the classroom.

One way that I plan to help keep the classroom organized and under control is to practice using PBS plans (see appendix C for created PBS plan). The plan would be used to record any behaviors that students are having that cause disruption to the class or are inhibiting learning. With these plans they would also be used to help fix any behaviors that are happening and to work with the student to keep them focused on their learning.

When looking at the book *The First Days of School*, it also talks about how when you are an effective teacher you don't necessarily use discipline because that is behavior management. Rather being an effective teacher is about managing the classroom. When we implement and produce good procedures that students can easily follow, they will want to pay attention and they will want to learn. If we have a classroom that is disorganized and chaotic, there will be many behavioral issues and students will not be able to learn.

Conclusion.

The ways we choose to plan out our classroom make a difference and the strategies we use can also make a difference. Having the right resources will help me improve my classroom to be a great one. I hope to use the policies and procedures to help the class stay orderly, organized, and well disciplined. In addition to using all of these methods, I also hope to follow

the advice that Mr. Terronez was given, “A great teacher isn’t a teacher.” This may sound puzzling, but I take it to mean that I hope the effects of my policies and procedures do not stay confined to the classroom but leave an impression on the students.

References

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Seroyer, C. (2012). Using THE FIRST DAYS OF SCHOOL - Digital. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.effectiveteaching.com/store/products/videos/using-the-first-days-of-school-digital#preview>

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Appendix A

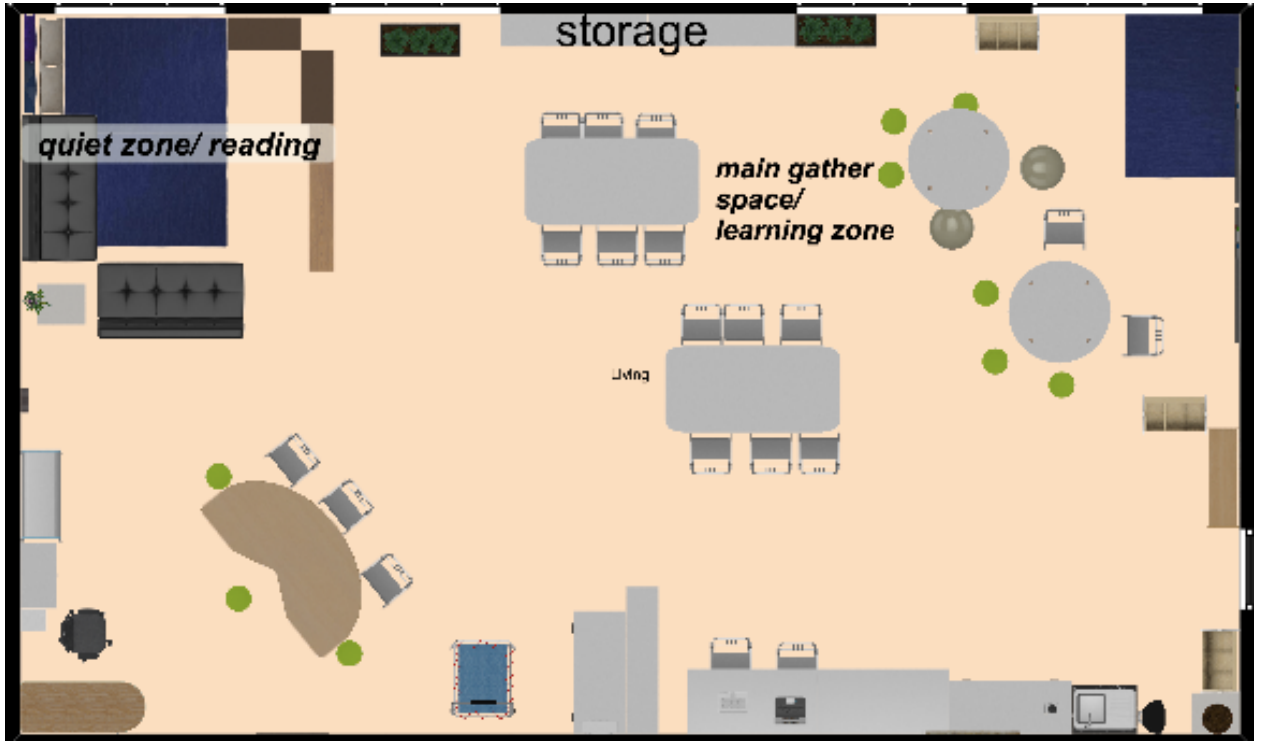
i 2 T

i: If you are having a hard time remembering what to do, first look at the instructions.

2: if you still don't know what to do you are supposed to do ask at least 2 neighbors to help you

T: if you're still a little unsure then you can go and talk to the teacher.

Appendix B



Appendix C

My own version of a PBS plan

Student's name: _____

Behavior that is occurring: _____

Observer: _____

Class period: _____

Date: _____

What was taking place before the incident:

What happened during the incident:

Steps taken during the incident:

The behavior that is being recorded and why:

Other comments: