

NPTT PROGRAM

EDCI 556 PORTFOLIO

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Assignment 1

Current Challenges Facing Today's Teachers
(Social, Cultural and Political)

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May 10, 2006

Current Challenges Facing Today's Teachers (Social, Cultural and Political)

Today's teachers in public education face many challenges everyday here in the United States. I would like to focus on what I believe are the three biggest challenges in the areas of social, cultural and political.

In the social area, teachers face the challenge of adapting to the ever changing family structure and its impact on students. A high divorce rate producing many single family units and only mothers raising children has put an extra burden on instilling proper behavior and morals in children. This ripples into the classroom where teachers must handle behavior issues of children that did not exist 30 years ago.

Meeting the different diversity needs of students is a major challenge for teachers in the cultural area of our society. The first diversity challenge for teachers deals with the wide range of learning potential that students bring into class. For example, IEP students have special needs that must be addressed by law which require teachers to put forth extra time and energy in an already very busy schedule. A second diversity challenge facing teachers is promoting diversity acceptance within the various types of students in a school. Teaching students the principle, "all people are created equal" means treating every student with respect and not favoring or

liking one group of students over another.

Two challenges in the political area facing teachers concerns meeting the NCLB law and dealing with the low wages that new teachers are paid. As a first year high school math teacher, I've dealt with the new NCLB law which requires Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in student's math scores. These math scores are directly tied into the amount of federal money a school district receives and the negative impact of not meeting these AYP goals. This puts tremendous pressure on math teachers to produce test results requiring teachers to "teach to the test" and not provide a comprehensive teaching of the math subjects being taught. The second challenges new teachers face is the very low salaries being paid. For professionals making a career change to teaching, this is a major challenge to address. For me, starting out in Montana and trying to live within a budget based on only \$22,000 to \$26,000, is difficult given the current high cost of living. This puts extra stress on a new teacher besides all the challenges being faced in the classroom.

Assignment 2

My Perceptions of the Landscape of Political Activism in Public
Education 2006

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May 17, 2006

My Perceptions of the Landscape of Political Activism in Public Education 2006

For the past four decades a revolution has been reshaping the power and authority relationships at all levels of the public educational governance and policy system that exists between the local, state and federal authorities. Until the early 1970s, local control of public education through the school board was almost the sole base of power for public education. However, starting in the mid 1970's and gaining strength in the 1980s, the state began to exert more control on what happens at schools due to its need to insure equality of opportunity for all students. This was a result of the equal rights movement and was now being implemented in the school system. While this reform was building momentum in the 1980's, the courts began overturning school board finance systems as being inequitable and inadequate in the 1990s, which caused state legislatures to mount large scale reform programs with linkages to funding of state money to local schools. Acceptance of funds by local schools gave the state more say as to how the funds were being spent, which transferred more power to them. When local school boards became dependent on these funds, they were forced to comply with new state mandates on schools' performance in relation to students' education levels. Major reform reached the federal level in 2001 with the No Child Left Behind law

which now tied federal funds to every school's performance, as measured by standardized testing of students in English and Math. Now the federal government is requiring Adequate Yearly Progress improvements for every school, causing major changes at the local level.

A closer examination of the impact and what changes are occurring is warranted at the district level, beginning at the local school board level then proceeding through the superintendent and central office down to each school's principal and the teachers who are the ultimate focal point of education reform. For local school boards, the role and function that they will occupy with the shift in power must be addressed. Their role now is to be facilitators of the educational reform that is occurring, by taking responsibility for local accountability and school improvements. Second, implementing a shift from enforcing standardizing conditions at a district to overseeing the improvements and adaptations required for reform is a major change for school boards. Finally, approving new curriculum that reflects state, federal and local goals will be a challenging task for school board members.

Change will also be needed for superintendents and central offices of local school districts. For superintendents, the challenge is maintaining a loyal bond to the school board while

monitoring the state and federal policies that are constantly evolving to insure that they are being followed and implemented. This will entail much skill in balancing and communications between the three authorities. Central offices can contribute to a school's improvement process by providing a bridge between the various schools in the district and resources outside such as curriculum consultants who can contribute changes in curriculum to meet the NCLB AYP goals.

At the individual school level, principals and teachers are re-defining their roles and tasks in meeting these new educational reforms. Principals hold a key influential position in improving the educational practices needed in the new accountability-based system required by state and federal reform. They'll need to perfect such new skills as being a mediator, policy processor and adapter, communicator, site innovator to meet these new policies and information manager. Teachers are impacted the most when new mandates are set in meeting state assessments. These require new skills in dealing with state accountability criteria, learning how to process data from standardized tests and adapt teaching practices to improve scores. Also, finding ways to get each student up to the standard will be challenging. Finally, creating an integrated grading system where both classroom performance and standardized tests results motivate students' efforts will be difficult.

Assignment 3

Restoring Professionalism and Status in the Teaching Profession

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June 10, 2006

Restoring Professionalism and Status in the Teaching Profession

Teaching has not always been afforded “professional” status. There are reasons for this, but the main purpose of this paper is to discuss how professionalism can be restored in the teaching profession.

I see commitment as being the biggest key to success in restoring professionalism and status in the teaching profession. In the United States, public education reform has been on the forefront since the early 1980s, with sweeping changes required under the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Law. This law ties students’ performance on high stakes test scores to federal money grants for high schools. With this fundamental shift in priority and the consequences of not meeting NCLB Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals, the teaching profession must reshape itself into a more professional occupation. This more professional approach needs to be one that is equipped to handle the difficult challenge of meeting the school’s AYP by improving the quality of public education being provided to students. Only then, will student be prepared to enter the 21 century economy and job market. This reshaping of the teaching profession will allow the restoring of the status of the profession to a higher level, where it will be recognized as a true profession.

There are various groups that must be committed to the reshaping of the teaching profession and its status in society. First and foremost, teachers and their unions, principals, superintendents and school boards of the school districts must all be committed to improving professionalism in teaching. But in addition, students' parents, the communities where the school districts reside, the general public and finally the state and federal governments who control reforms via school budgets will also need to be involved. I will examine each group and the role each must take in contributing to the restoration of the professionalism and status in teaching.

For public education, teachers and their unions both must embrace the reshaping of the teaching profession as a full time commitment. The core reshaping element for teachers will be changing their attitude towards their profession. Believing and acting as high quality professionals will be critical. Many facets exist for improvement in the domain of professional responsibilities, such as a commitment to continuous growth and development as a teaching professional. Teachers raise the bar of excellence when they demonstrate a level of distinguished performance through enhancing content knowledge of their subject area by earning advanced degrees and by willingly contributing to the profession in the following ways: mentoring new teachers, writing articles, and participating in professional

organizations, such as the National Council of Teachers in Mathematics. An instrumental change that teaching unions need to push for is the restructuring of salary scales, which should be based on performance, instead of years of service. Providing resources that help teachers raise the quality of their professionalism will also advance the profession in the eyes of the public.

Principals, superintendents and school boards must support the reshaping of the teacher profession too. For example, providing professional growth workshops and paying for teachers to attend them will help raise the status of teachers in our society. When school boards require higher qualification standards for teachers, they will also demonstrate the commitment of the school district to the quality of education by hiring the best teachers available.

Parents must also be committed to helping teachers raise the quality of education in their children's schools. Strong parental encouragement of children to perform well in school and behave properly will go a long way in enabling teachers to perform at their best levels in teaching students. When teachers are freed from having to spend a good part of every class on behavior modification and discipline, they'll be better able to provide a more effective learning experience.

The communities where the school districts reside can support reshaping of the teaching profession by raising tax dollars to help pay teachers a professional wage. When communities accept that teachers are highly trained and educated professionals who play a weighty role in preparing our next generation to survive in the global economy of today, they will realize this is money well spent.

The general public must recognize the stakes involved in providing the best education possible for students. Success in education rests on the teaching profession's ability to reshape itself into a high caliber profession. Public support in these endeavors is essential. Also, the general public must allow the teacher's profession to rise on society's ladder of importance and value. When society deems teachers low on this ladder, then the profession attracts less qualified people to enter the profession. But when society places teachers high on the ladder, then prestige and status are gained by the profession which leads to attracting highly qualified teachers.

The state and federal governments simply must be committed to providing the funds required to support teachers and their profession to meet the new requirements laid down by the NCLB law. Simply making AYP requirements with adverse consequences to schools, without providing financial means to achieve them, sets everybody involved up for failure, including the students,

teachers, school districts, and the communities in which they all reside. I believe the state and federal governments have good intentions in raising the quality of education in this country. However, financial resources must be put into place to promote the growth and improvement of the teaching profession.

In conclusion, commitment is a key ingredient in restoring the teaching profession and its status in society. With the high stake consequences of raising the quality of education at hand, reshaping the teaching profession is critical to success.

Assignment 4

Applying Classroom Management Techniques to a Math Classroom

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June 28, 2006

Applying Classroom Management Techniques to a Math Classroom

For today's high school teacher, use of classroom management theory and techniques are critical to conducting a learning community of students where high expectations are met. Much is at stake in a classroom. Many parameters must be covered by the teacher in order to have a well-run, productive classroom where the students are highly motivated and willing to cooperate in achieving a high degree of learning. Knowing the theory and applying the techniques early in a school year are simply essential to a teacher's success in achieving the highly productive level of learning that students need to enter the global market of the twenty-first century.

The purpose of this paper is to focus on the high points of classroom management and how to apply these techniques to a math classroom. This could provide a practical guide to math classroom management for first year math teachers. Many students today are not motivated to produce the kind of effort and self-discipline required to learn mathematics, and so classroom misbehavior aimed at avoiding the work is often the result. This paper will focus both on the theory needed to manage a classroom effectively, as well as specific techniques to apply the theory in a mathematics classroom.

Classroom management should be founded on eight underlying

components: planning and organizing the learning environment, creating a positive learning environment, getting a good start in the classroom, creating a learning community, maintaining a good learning environment, dealing proactively with discipline problems, opening lines of communications, designing a motivated learning environment (Hoy & Hoy, 2002, p. 187).

Planning and Organizing the Learning Environment

The first component, planning and organizing the learning environment, is critical to a teacher's success. An effective teacher must spend a significant amount of time performing these planning and organizing functions in order to maintain a productive classroom. There are three goals a teacher must strive to achieve for a learning environment (Hoy & Hoy, 2002, p. 189-192). The first is to gain the students' cooperation in performing tasks required to learn math. For example, students must pay attention in class in order to learn the math skill being taught, and then they must complete the associated homework, which enables them to master the skill. Buy-in from the students is needed for the class to maintain a fluid moving schedule through the material being covered by the teacher. The second goal for the math teacher is to master the critical time factor, to create for more actual learning minutes within a classroom period. Many minutes during a period can be lost if

inefficient procedures are followed by the teacher. One example is how quickly homework is gathered and returned each period. The third goal focuses on helping students learn how to become better managers of themselves. For high school math, students must learn how to manage their own time schedule in order to complete homework assignments on a regular daily basis. Failure to do so will hinder the student's ability to learn new material that is based on knowledge of previous skills covered in class.

Creating a Positive Learning Environment

The second component for classroom management deals with creating a positive learning environment within which students can thrive (Hoy & Hoy, 2002, p. 192-202). The first step for new teachers is deciding on what rules and procedures for the classroom will be given to the students. This can be a challenging task for new teachers, since they don't have any classroom experience yet. However, the effort put in will pay big dividends in creating that positive learning environment within the classroom. When teachers take the time to consider what items fall under procedures (which are needed to run an orderly class), and write them down for the class to see and follow, they will produce an efficient setting. Identifying the specific rules to follow will also set the tone of the class. Students today need to be explicitly told by verbal and written

what the rules are. While thirty years ago this was not the norm in classrooms it is simply required today for teachers to survive. Students today often seem to have difficulty adhering to behavioral boundaries and must be specifically instructed on what is allowed and what is not. Also, when school rules are enforced throughout a building, it makes the teacher's classroom rules easier to enforce. For example, schools should make a policy against using portable music players and cellphones, as well as eating and drinking in class, so that each teacher doesn't have to constantly fight to insure the rules are followed. The second step for teachers is to design a classroom floor plan which allows both for maximum control by the teacher and efficiency in the learning process. For a math classroom, providing all students a good view of the whiteboards is essential to learning math, so they can follow along when problems are being solved. For secondary math teachers, creating a floor plan and then conducting a mental analysis of how it will function can provide a positive learning environment for the students.

Getting a Good Start in the Classroom

The third component of classroom management relates to getting a good start in the beginning of the school year, in order to set the tone for the rest of the year (Hoy & Hoy, 2002, p. 202-205).

Effective classroom managers for secondary students realize how important it is to focus on the procedures and rules and communicate them to the classroom. Some students will probe the teacher to test how much they can get away with. It is critical during this period for the teacher to consistently enforce the rules and let the class realize they are for real. The consequences for a teacher not getting the classroom into a cooperative learning environment are severe, and a long school year of behavior problems will follow. For a math class, this effort will result in more efficient group effort in understanding the complex math skills being taught, with more time available for instruction and understanding and less time needing to be spent on classroom distractions.

Creating a Learning Community

The fourth component of classroom management requires the teacher to create a learning community, consisting of students and teacher (Hoy & Hoy, 2002, p. 203). When a teacher can create a sense of trust and interdependency between the students and him/herself, he/she develops a caring and giving community working together to learn. Johnson and Johnson describe one technique to achieve this, involving the three Cs of classroom management, which are cooperative community, constructive conflict and civic values (Johnson D. & Johnson, 1999, p. 133).

When students are working together as a class to achieve the same mutual goal, then a cooperative community is formed. Academic and interpersonal conflicts must be resolved using constructive conflict resolution, in order for the community to continue to learn together. Finally, the civic values a community uses to hold together are the beliefs and understandings they all share that are critical for the learning community. In a math class, the cohesiveness provided by the 3 Cs is essential for the math teacher to achieve, in order for the class to maximize its learning of math concepts.

Maintaining a Good Learning Environment

The fifth component of classroom management requires the teacher to main a good learning environment for the students to excel in (Hoy & Hoy, 2002, p. 205). Once the school year is off on the right foot and the class is following procedures and rules, the teacher must transition into maintaining this learning environment for the rest of the year. This can be accomplished by encouraging the students to be engaged in their studies. One technique is for the teacher to keep a high percentage of direct "teacher to student" ratio time, which increases the amount of "on task" time students perform in class. Providing some independent time to allow students to work on math assignments will also break up the math classroom routine. Another factor

that will help teachers maintain a good learning environment is to prevent problems from occurring in the first place. A teacher who is experienced at this task seems to have eyes behind his/her head and has a keen sense of what is happening in the classroom at all times. For the new math teacher, this is hard to learn, since so much time is spent doing problems on the board, with your back to the class. Realizing how important it is to turn around every now and then and look at the class helps. Also, maintaining a class group focus throughout the lesson helps keep all students on task and engaged with the lesson being taught. The challenge for the math teacher is to keep the productive class moving along all year in order to cover the math skills in the course. Many times, the teacher runs out of time and fails to cover the end of the year material that might not be covered next year, so the students miss these skills and fall behind.

Dealing Proactively with Discipline Problems

The sixth component of classroom management is to deal proactively with discipline problems, in order to minimize them (Hoy & Hoy, 2002, p. 208). For new teachers, becoming comfortable with this task takes some time. However, there are seven techniques which can be used to stop misbehavior quickly in a classroom, as follows (Hoy & Hoy, 2002, pp. 208-209).

First, make eye contact with students and use other nonverbal signals to let the offender know he/she is in the wrong. Second, use verbal hints to let the offender realize you know they are doing something wrong. Third, ask the student if he/she is aware of the negative effects of his/her actions. Next, remind students of the procedure and have them follow it correctly. Then, in a calm manner ask the offending student to state the correct rule or procedure and then follow it. Sixth, tell the student in an assertive way to stop the misbehavior. Finally, offer a choice to the student and describe the consequence of picking each one. Teachers must be consistent in applying established consequences.

Teachers can use three special classroom management programs that are based on behavioral principles in dealing with discipline problems of students. They are group consequences, contingency contracts and a token program (Hoy & Hoy, 2002, pp. 211-212). First, group consequences can be instituted that are based on good behavior, with a reward given. Or, group consequences can be based on poor behavior, with an associated penalty. Caution should be used in punishing a whole class for the behavior of just a few students, however. Next, contingency contracts can be used by the teacher for students who simply do not follow the rules. This allows the student a final chance to adjust his/her behavior before failing, with the clear written

understanding of the associated consequences. Finally, a token reinforcement can be attempted as a last resort. Tokens can be points, marks or anything that can be tracked and exchanged for reward. However, this method requires the teacher to keep track of when and how many tokens are earned, which can be quite complicated and very time consuming.

Another model to consider for classroom discipline is the democratic approach (MacKenzie, 2003, pp. 54-60). This approach is based on being firm with discipline and respectful to the student. It stops misbehavior and teaches responsibility to the students along with communicating in the clearest simplest way the rules for acceptable behavior. For teachers, it takes less time and energy to implement, along with minimizing hurt feelings, damaging relationships or provoking power struggles in the process (MacKenzie, 2003, p. 56). The teacher's job is to provide clear limits to his/her students, offer acceptable choices and explain instructive consequences that hold students accountable for their actions. Students are provided with the information they need to make acceptable choices about their behavior and are allowed to experience these consequences good or bad. This all happens with no threats, detective work, lecturing, cajoling and most importantly, no power struggle. This system works great in a math classroom because once the system is implemented and students know the consequences of

their actions, the math teacher can focus on teaching math and gain more valuable "on task time" for the students to learn the math skills.

Opening Lines of Communications

The seventh component of classroom management requires teachers to consistently maintain open lines of communications between themselves and the parents, as well as with their students (Hoy & Hoy, 2002, pp. 213-219). It is critical that the teacher remember to send clear messages to students so that they can receive them accurately, keeping in mind that people respond to what they think was meant. Also, the way the message was delivered via tone and facial expressions plays a key role in how messages are sent and received. Teachers must be aware of this situation, so as to not provide wrong information. Another technique to help with communications with students is to be an empathetic, active listener when students have a problem. This requires the teacher to actually listen to what the student has to say and not provide a solution quickly, but rather to work with the student in finding the solution him/herself. When students realize that the teacher cares, then they feel freer to trust the teacher and talk more openly. It is also important for the teacher to communicate classroom management policies to parents. Involving parents from the beginning allows them to

work with their sons and daughters in following the procedures and rules of the classroom, as well as with keeping up with the math workload. Today's email technology also enables math teachers and parents to communicate more quickly and efficiently about a student's progress in math throughout the school year, which can help avoid a delay in parents addressing problems with their children.

Designing a Motivated Learning Environment

The eighth and final component of classroom management deals with teachers designing a motivated learning environment that allows students to reach their learning potential (Hoy & Hoy, 2002, pp. 220-228). There are six areas where teachers make decisions that can influence student motivation to learn. They are known by the acronym TARGET, which stands for Tasks, Autonomy, Recognition, Grouping, Evaluation and Time (Maehr & Anderman, 1993, p. 604).

For Tasks, the teacher must decide how to enhance the attractiveness of making learning meaningful. Autonomy decisions focus on deciding where the optimal freedom line is for students in making choices and taking responsibilities in learning. Recognition decisions for the teacher involve the use of rewards within the school setting and providing opportunities for all students to be recognized for learning achievements.

Grouping involves how the teacher will organize various school learning experiences in groups for students to enhance social skill development. Evaluation deals with how the teacher will assess students' performance and how to improve it through student participation. Time is a critical resource that requires teachers to make decisions about what tasks will be conducted every day to maximize the learning experience. Following TARGET will help math teachers make smart decisions to help their student's motivation and desire to excel in expanding their mathematics knowledge.

Theory into Action Guidelines

There are five guideline areas that provide a tool to put classroom management into action for a teacher. They include developing rules and procedures, designing a learning space, encouraging student accountability, establishing penalties, and establishing working relationships with families. There is a specified sequence of steps that will enable a teacher to implement each one.

There are five steps involved in developing rules and procedures (Hoy & Hoy, 2002, p. 194). First, the teacher needs to determine procedures for student upkeep of desks, classroom equipment and other facilities. Next, he/she must decide how students will be expected to enter and leave the room. Thirdly, establish a

signal and teach it to your students. Fourth, set procedures for student participation, and fifth, determine how you will communicate, collect and return assignments.

To design a learning space, there are eight steps to implementation (Hoy & Hoy, 2002, p. 200). First, note the fixed features and plan accordingly. Second, create easy access to materials and a well organized place to store them. Thirdly, provide students with clean, convenient surfaces for studying. Next, make sure work areas are private and quiet. Then, arrange things so teachers can see students and students can see all instructional presentations. Sixth, avoid dead spaces and "racetracks". Seventh, provide choice and flexibility. Finally, try new arrangements, then evaluate and improve.

In encouraging student accountability, there are four steps to implement (Hoy & Hoy, 2002, p. 206). First, make basic work requirements clear. Then, communicate the specifics of assignment. Next, monitor work in progress. Fourth, give frequent academic feedback.

To establish penalties, there are four steps required for implementation (Hoy & Hoy, 2002, p. 210). First, delay the discussion of the situation until you and the students involved are calmer and more objective. Second, impose penalties privately. Third, after imposing a penalty, reestablish a positive relationship with the student immediately. Finally, set

up a graded list of penalties that will fit many occasions.

When establishing working relationships with families, there are four steps (Hoy & Hoy, 2002, p. 220). First, make sure families know the expectations and rules of your class and school. Then, make families partners in recognizing good citizenship. Thirdly, identify talents in the community to help build a learning environment in your class. Fourth, seek cooperation from families when behavior problems arise.

In conclusion, this paper addressed classroom management theory and techniques that a beginning math teacher can apply for practical use in the math classroom. There are eight components that the teacher should understand and follow to implement classroom management in the math classroom. Also reviewed were five theory into action guidelines. These provided specific techniques the teacher can perform to make a classroom management system work in creating a highly efficient and productive math class with well-behaved students.

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