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Student Responsibility and Engagement

Student responsibility is extremely vital and it plays a big role in classroom management. Students need to take responsibility for their actions so that time in that classroom is used more for learning instead of punishment. The problem students face is, they do not know how to take responsibility for their actions because they are not being taught how to do so. It is the job of teachers and parents to teach responsibility. Responsibility is skill that is necessary for students to thrive in school and in the “real world”. One would think that since it is such an important life skill that it would be taught in school more often however it is often put to the side because it is not in the traditional curriculum to do so. There is some much that teachers have to fit into the year that some things get sidelined, responsibility should never be one of those things. So, here are a few strategies that can be used to teach responsibility in the classroom.

Teachers should hold classroom meetings as often as needed in their classrooms. Classroom meetings are a place that issues in the class are brought to the surface and dealt with. Students should be the one that suggests a classroom meeting be held. This allows that students to watch their actions and the actions of their peers and determine whether or not it is appropriate classroom behavior. When that classroom meeting is called the students should be the ones who run the meeting. They need to talk about why the meeting is being held (talk about what actions should continue and what actions need to stop) and talk about what they can do to prevent actions that need to stop from happening. The teacher’s job will be to make sure the students stay

on track and lead students in the right directions. When students hold the classroom meetings then they feel like they are the people in charge and that makes them more willing to come up with solutions.

“The language we use is the window to our thoughts” (Marzano, 2003, p. 81). Students often need to be taught the language of responsibility so that they can learn to be responsible. “If they [students] have no language to talk about responsibility, they have few tools with which to explore the concept” (Marzano, 2003, p. 82). It is a teachers job to teach the language of responsibility to students so that when it comes time to take responsibility they are able to.

To be responsible students need to learn how to self-monitor and self-control. This can be taught through a series of 4 phases: record keeping and contingent rewards, monitoring without formal recording keeping, no formal record keeping and no reward, and student autonomy. For phase one (record keeping and contingent rewards), the students will periodically monitor their own behavior and record it on a self-report form. A goal will be given to the students and each time they meet their goal they are given a reward. For phase two (monitoring without formal record keeping), students will no longer record their behavior on a self-report form. The self-report form will be “replaced by a less obstructive method of record keeping” (Marzano, 2003, p.87). This method might consist of some form of journaling. The teacher and student should meet at the end of the week and discuss the students behavior. If the student’s behavior was good a reward should be given. For phase 3 (no formal record keeping and no reward), the student will still keep an alternate form of record keeping and the student and teacher will still meet at the end of the week but no reward will be given based on behavior. For phase 4 (student autonomy), the student no longer meets with the teacher however occasional discussions about behavior are appropriate.

I believe that student responsibility is not taught enough in the classroom. While I teach, I will incorporate some of the methods listed about to help my students learn how to be responsible. Teaching something of this much importance will take time and that is the only reserve I have about it. I do not want to devote so much time to make sure my students understand responsibility that I put something else important on the sideline.

If students are not engaged in the classroom then they will not learn anything. “When students are engaged, they tend to think about the topic more frequently and in-depth” (Marzano, 2011, p. 87). When students think frequently about a topic then they are more likely going to be able to apply that knowledge to life later on. Here are three steps to get and keep the students engaged: connect to the students’ lives, connect to the students’ ambitions, and encourage application of knowledge.

Students have goals in their personal lives and when they can connect education with life goals, it helps them succeed in both life and school. Two ways help students connect their personal life to education is comparison tasks and analogical reasoning. When using comparison it is important to let the students decide what they want to compare. When using analogical reasoning, students would compare two different parts of their life. The traditional analogy looks like painter : brush :: carpenter : _____ but the analogy that the teacher would have the student fill out for the analogical reasoning would look like painter : brush :: _____ : _____. This gives students the freedom to choose what they get to compare.

“Life ambitions probably represent the highest level of self-system goals” (Marzano, 2011, p. 92). This is why it is imperative that teachers help connect students learning to students ambitions. A good way to do this is to have students work on a personal project. This allows the

students to address their long-term goals and it keeps them engaged. Throughout the personal project the students will answer seven questions: what do I want to accomplish, who else has accomplished the same goal, who will support me, what skills and resources will I need to accomplish my goal, what will I have to change in order to achieve my goal, what is my plan for achieving my goal, and how hard will I have to work, what small steps can I take right now, and how have I been doing, what have I learned about myself.

The final step is to encourage application of knowledge. This can be done by providing projects to the students and giving them choices. When students get to choose the project they get to put together, they will use the knowledge they have and put it together for a great final product.