

Learning Environment Reflection

Tuesday, February 7th –

My first technique is one I feel very strongly about and I try to implement daily, it is to treat my students courteously and with respect. I believe that we should all treat each other how we would like to be treated no matter our positions. We are all human beings. I believe that if my students see that I treat them with respect that they will do the same to me and anytime there is an environment with mutual respect it is a good environment for productivity.

One way I show the students I respect them is to treat them as adults. I have learned their names and when they ask for my help I say, “One second Kyrece, you’re after Ashley.” This way he knows that I know he needs my help, I have acknowledged him and have let him know that he will get my assistance after I am finished helping Ashley. When changing rooms I sometimes will hold the door open for them and other days they will hold the door open for me. I am sure to always say thank you to the person holding the door. When a student offers to erase the board at the end of class I tell them how much I appreciate their help. I try my best to acknowledge and praise each act from the students.

I feel that this is an invaluable characteristic of anybody, no matter your profession but especially professions where you depend so much on the cooperation of others. The students are not going to be willing to participate and listen to directions from a person who disrespect them and treats them as if they are beneath the teacher. I will continue to be aware of the students’ actions and while things get hectic at times I will try to keep the order of the students asking for help. This way Thomas doesn’t get mad and feel that I lied to him when I help another student before him when he requested help first.

Wednesday, February 8th –

In my lesson today my goal was to personalize the lesson for the learners by using my students’ own experiences or providing examples relevant to them. Since my students do not share the same love for math as I do, I feel that it is my responsibility to stimulate as much interest in the math that I can and many times this involves being very creative on my part. The week before in a homework assignment I asked the students to share with me at least two things about themselves that they wanted me to know. Many of them put that they play a sport or enjoy music. I wanted to do this so that I could create accurate real-world examples involving my students.

I was excited to share my lesson. I included information about the amount of money required for students to go on their ninth grade trip to Busch Gardens (which is truly being planned for them) as well as a word problem about Shayna and the cost of her cell phone plan. When these particular slides appeared they got the students’ attention! The Busch Gardens applied directly to every student in the room and while the figures were made up, the scenario was realistic and the students had a reason to find out the equation of the line (in order to find out

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the total cost of the trip for 30 students to attend). For the cell phone problem, while Shayna was the only student specifically mentioned, the other student's were interested because they knew the person the problem was talking about (as opposed to a textbook referring to a person the students do not know). Also, the cost of a cell phone plan is a concept that many, if not all of my students have encountered before. I believe that both of these examples worked because I had the attention of the class and the math was made real for them. They weren't just creating equations, the numbers had meaning.

As far as planned changes for the future, I would like to use students' names as often as I can even if it's a way of labeling information. Instead of asking the students to choose to graph line 1 or line 2 I could ask them to choose between Latonya's line and Daniel's line. It makes it more interesting. When possible I would love to include the interests they shared with me, I have already planned to use the fact that Kiearri is on the varsity basketball team and how the number of hours she practices has a positive relationship with the number of points she scores per game.

Thursday, February 9th –

I'm not typically a very funny person. People never laugh at my jokes, but I attempted to bring humor into the classroom. It's clear that most everybody would prefer a funny teacher over a straight-laced teacher (teaching ability aside). I figured I would give it a shot in order to make the lesson more engaging as well as open up to them and let them know that I'm a human too, not just a serious lady who is really good at math.

I created a worksheet where the students used their answers to each problem to get the corresponding letter which in turn made a riddle. Instead of simply finding answers to math problems the students were more determined since they wanted to figure out what the riddle was asking. This also served as a way for them to check that they were getting the correct answers because if their words they got didn't make sense then they knew they had messed up somewhere. During the time the students were working on the activity I circulated around the room. I had two different students ask me within 30 seconds if I had a pencil they could use and then if I had paper. Where I would normally just say, "No, ask a classmate for some." Today I said, "No I don't. What do I look like, Office Depot?" It was a quick way I could bring humor into the class and while it wasn't related to the math it was a fun way to show the students that I do have a personality. I feel that this technique did help the lesson be more enjoyable for both me and the students. We were able to relax a bit while doing math at the same time.

As far as planned changes to this technique, I would probably try to plan math humor into the lesson beforehand, since I can't really come up with it on the fly. I just want to be careful that my humor doesn't ever offend any student or make them feel embarrassed.

Monday, February 13th –

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Today my goal was to make a large effort to give learners personalized praise for specific performance when they do well. I feel that this is a very important aspect of creating the relationship with the student. By letting them know that you appreciate their effort they are more likely to participate again in the future. I also wanted to use this technique because it is one way to easily announce a success for a student. This is all very important in my class since many of my students are not very confident in their math abilities and don't want to share their thoughts or ideas related to math. I want to make the best of what they give me and be sure I can make them feel more comfortable to share again in the future.

In teaching I had a few students suggest answers and no matter whether they were correct or incorrect I acknowledged their suggestion. Thomas gave an incorrect solution and I said, "Almost Thomas, what else do we need for equations in slope-intercept form? You said a slope, that's good." and then Shaquille gave me the correct answer, but he said it so quietly in the front row that only I could hear him. I said, "Right Shaquille! Can you repeat what you said?" I think that he wanted to share his answer but didn't want others to hear him if he was wrong. I hope that the students learn that no matter whether they give a right or wrong answer there is no criticism or ridicule. If anything there is appreciation for participating.

Since a majority of my students don't willingly volunteer answers I may begin calling on students for specific questions meant for them. This way I can match up a question to a student I feel confident can answer it correctly, this way I begin building in small successes for each student and hopefully they will then feel more confident to share an answer on their own.

Tuesday, February 14th –

The learning environment for today was to sit and/or stand near the students. My reason for choosing this technique was to try to cut down on the amount of off task behavior. Understandably, my students would rather socialize than learn math so many times I feel that half my challenge is getting the students to pay attention. If they would just pay attention I could teach them. I figured through the power of proximity I may be able to do this. If I am near them then I will know that they are off task so they will need to be on task as long as I am around.

I easily noticed that the times I was circulating throughout the room during the lesson the students were much more focused and on task. When I stood at the board asking questions and writing in answers was when the students in the back of the room, furthest from me, felt that they could talk. Then during the group work time I circulated from group to group checking that all the students were involved in the task. When I came upon a group I knew had a particularly strong academic student I joined the group for awhile to ensure that the paper was getting passed around and each person was participating. I feel that this technique worked because I forced the students to follow the rules, at least while I was at their group. The students were all getting their turn in addition to getting help from their group members.

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The problem with this is that I, the teacher, can't be at every group all the time to enforce the rules. I also can't use the power of proximity at all times across all parts of the room. I think I can, however, ask a student to help me in standing at the board to write the information we come up with as a class that way I am free to circulate as we discuss the material and I am not required to remain near the board to add additional information we discuss.