CEP 883 Final Project : Analysis of Current Classroom Management Style

Emma Gaffney

HELLO!

My name is Emma Gaffney.

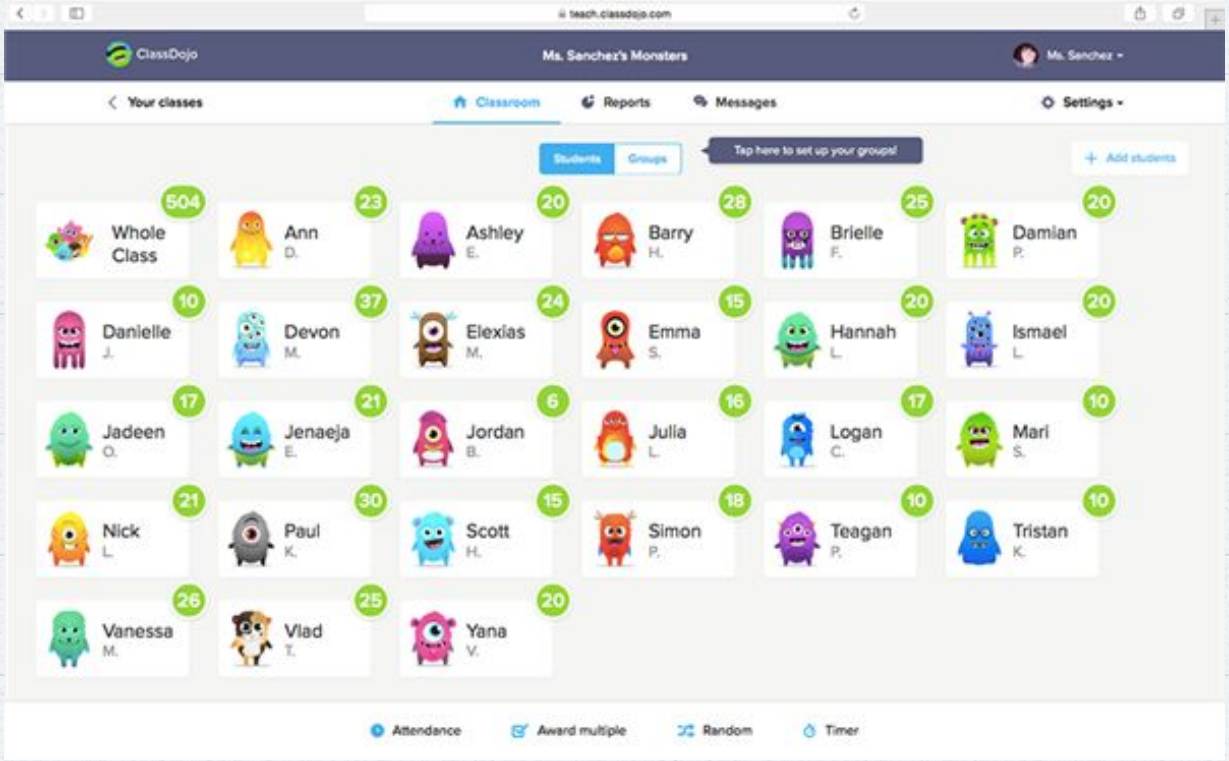
I am a third year First Grade teacher and am furthering my education by earning my Master's at MSU. The following analysis of my own current classroom management style will showcase what I've learned in this course, and assist me in applying that knowledge directly to my profession. I hope to gain insight on my personal classroom management style, and develop strategies that will improve my ability to connect with my students and be the best teacher I can be for them.

How I would describe my classroom management style

- Above all I try to be positive and encouraging to my students.
- My goal is for all of my students to know I believe in them, and that begins with a solid and trusting relationship (my first priority).
- I try to prevent behavioral issues from arising by implementing positive reinforcement ALL DAY.
- Of course when students do challenge rules or authority I believe a behavior plan centered around positive reinforcement and natural or logical consequences are best.
    - For example, if a student continues to talk and distract their classmates, they should be moved to an isolated area away from friends.
- Behavior is communication, so I am always striving to understand the function of any disruptive or challenging behavior in order to find a solution.

How I would describe my classroom management style

- I use ClassDojo as a whole-class behavior management tool.
  - I like that I am able to connect with families using this website and students love to earn points and watch them add up.
  - I display the avatars of all students during the day using my interactive projector so that students can view their progress throughout the day.
  - Students can earn points for various behaviors (chosen by me) or lose points for various misbehaviors.
- Classroom economy
  - I use a reward system in my class that is similar to a classroom economy...
    - Students earn points on ClassDojo throughout the day.
    - At the end of the day students get a “brag tag” for every 5 dojo points earned.
    - On Friday’s we have “ticket or treat” where students can use their brag tags to buy prizes or tickets with special privileges like “chew gum” or “show and tell”.



Here is an example of what classdojo looks like.

Theories I resonate with

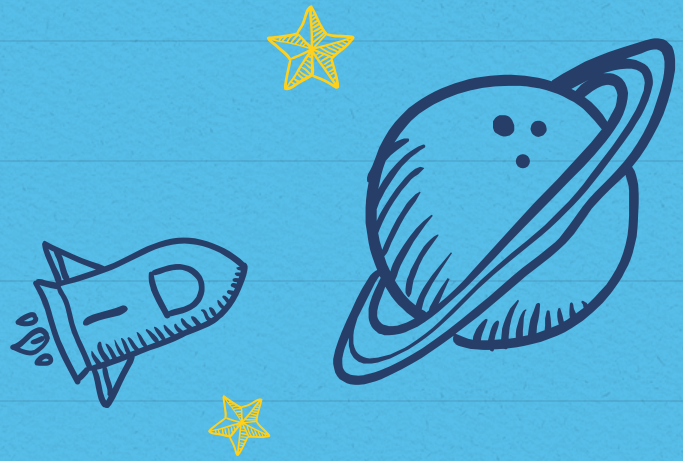
In this course we learned about different theories and theorists that contributed to behavior management in the classroom. Here are some that really speak to me as an educator.

- **Behaviorism**
  - "A behavior followed immediately by a reward will occur more frequently, a behavior will be extinguished when it is no longer reinforced, and a behavior followed closely by an undesirable consequence will occur less often," (Jones & Jones, 2020, p. 351).
- **Stanley Coopersmith : Theory of student needs**
  - I believe a child's self-esteem is extremely important and want my students to experience pride in their work and abilities.
  - Coopersmith argues that, "in order to possess high self-esteem, individuals need to experience significance, competence, and power" (Jones & Jones, 2020, p. 34).
    - Significance : the sense of being valued
    - Competence : the feeling of being able to successfully perform tasks
    - Power : the ability to understand and feel control

Aspects of classroom management I will be Analyzing

- Student Relationships
- Classroom Rules
- Family Communication
- Student Motivation
- Behavior Intervention

1. Student Relationships



“For students to to have their basic needs met, and thereby function effectively in the school environment, they need to experience positive relationships with others,” (Jones & Jones, 2020, p. 35).

Current strategies Used to build Student relationships

- **Before school year begins**
  - Articulation with last year's teacher (discussing relevant information, behavior plans, etc.).
  - Reviewing parent survey with important information.
  - The information I learn gives me a "headstart" before meeting students.
- **Throughout the school year**
  - Sharing personal information so students can get to know me.
  - Having informal conversations so I can get to know students!
  - Going to school events and other student activities (softball games, recitals, etc.).

Current strategies Used to build Student relationships

- **Throughout the school year (continued)**
  - Noncontingent attention : “Involves giving students time and attention not because of anything they’ve done, but just because you notice and value them as people, (Sprick, Garrison, & Howard, 1998, p. 279). Here are some examples…
    - Greeting students in the morning before they enter the classroom.
    - Eating snack at different tables each day.
    - Asking informal questions about their lives and interests.

Student Relationship Phases

- Newberry, 2010 conducted a study that analyzed teacher-student relationships in 4 different phases. I am introducing this study because it gave me a lot of thought while I was conducting research for this project. It will also come up again in other aspects of this presentation.
  - Appraisal : getting to know each other.
  - Agreement : routines and rules are established.
  - Testing : exploring limits and boundaries.
  - Planning : reflecting on current communication methods and planning for future interactions (p. 1697-1698).
- These phases aren't linear and, "in the first few weeks of school, teachers and students cycle through all four phases of relationship building identified in this study, that of Appraisal, Agreement, Testing and Planning, rapidly and often simultaneously" (Newberry, 2010, p. 1697).
- Just because these teachers and students can often cycle through these phases so quickly at the beginning of the year, does not mean you have to build a solid relationship within the first 2 weeks of school. "Each phase may vary in duration and number of times it is revisited" (p. 1699).

What I would like to implement in the future : how can I improve?

- **Noncontingent attention**
  - Making intentional effort to talk to a student who has recently been misbehaving (Sprick, Garrison, & Howard, 1998). This could be useful during the Testing phase to let students know that their behavior is not linked to how likeable they are.
  - I would like to begin doing this purposefully in order to show students that behavior is a choice and a bad choice does not mean a bad student. Great book for this concept.
- **Eating lunch with students** (Jones & Jones, 2020)
  - In my classroom, students can “buy” a ticket to eat lunch with the teacher, but some students will never eat lunch with me because they would rather choose another reward.
  - I would like to make a point to eat lunch individually with each student. I know that some students who are shy may feel intimidated eating lunch alone with me so for some students it might be beneficial to have them pick a buddy.

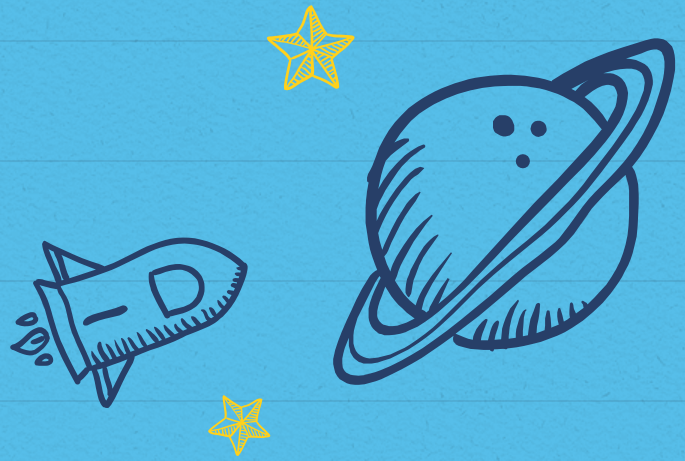
What I would like to implement in the future : how can I improve?

- **Letting go of negative emotions** (Newberry, 2010)
  - Something that has bothered me in the past about my personal tendencies is my difficulty putting my emotions aside when a student is misbehaving or being disrespectful. There is a specific student that always comes to mind and because the behavior he displayed was so challenging for me, I know that our relationship was damaged by my mistake in allowing my emotions to guide discipline. We began the year with excitement and a positive attitude, and somewhere around January his behavior became disruptive and disrespectful and frustrated me deeply because of how our relationship started. I felt like his behavior was purposeful and targeting my emotions, and he felt like I did not like being his teacher. This is something that I am ashamed of and am full of regret for. I'm thankful we turned a corner and ended the year on a positive note, but I still feel guilt about the time we "lost" in our relationship.
  - Newberry analyzed the interactions between a teacher (Sandy) and a difficult to manage student (Jacob) as they navigated through the relationship phases, "Sandy's ability to quickly let go of any negative emotion that might have influenced how she interacted with Jacob was a contributing factor in allowing him to respond positively to her and change his behavior" (p. 1700).

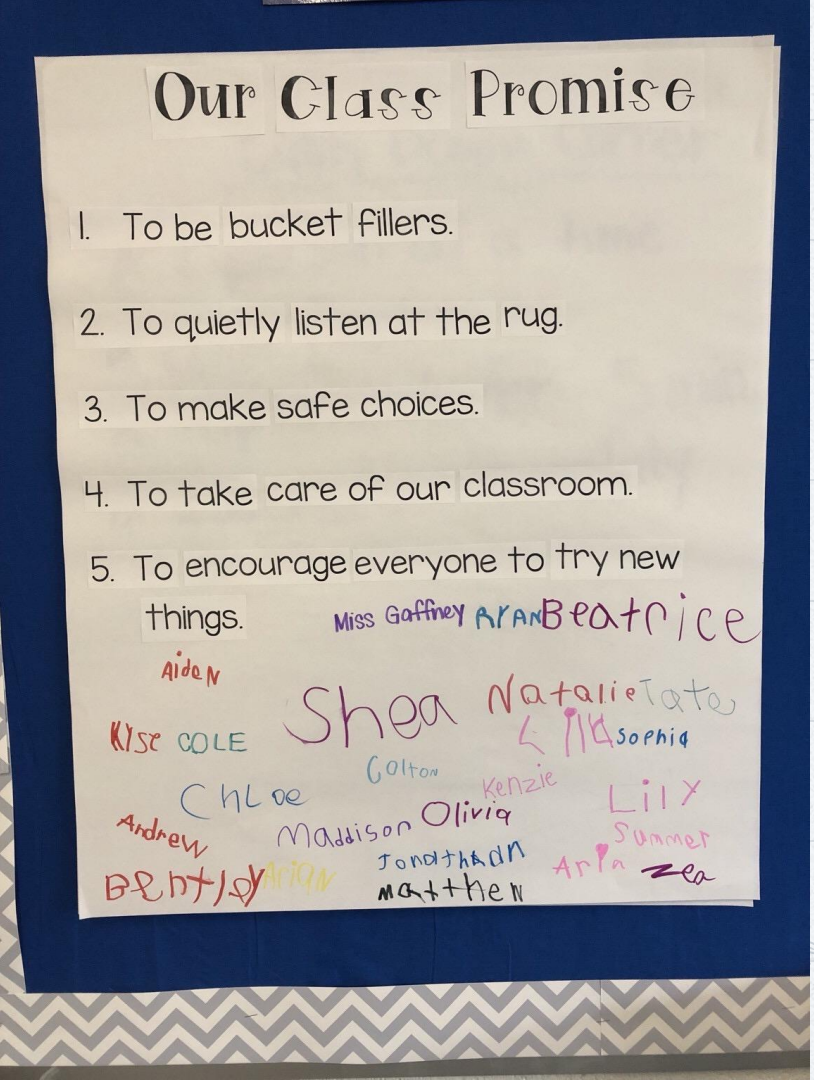
What I would like to implement in the future : how can I improve?

- **Letting go of negative emotions (continued)**
  - It was also mentioned in our Jones & Jones textbook the importance of adults being aware of their own personal emotions, *especially* for students who have experienced trauma.
  - One of four characteristics of a positive learning environment that provide a “foundation for learning and personal growth”, “Adults demonstrate awareness of their own emotions and behavior and respond to students in a calm. educational manner” (Jones & Jones, 2020, p. 16).
  - In order to improve my skills in building and maintaining positive relationships with my students I will focus on the following...
    - Keeping a calm voice.
    - Speaking at a comfortable volume.
    - Keeping a respectful distance from the student (not too close to avoid intimidation).
    - Being mindful of gestures and body language like pointing, etc. (Jones, 2020).

2. Classroom Rules



“In order for individuals to to feel good about themselves and their environment, they must experience a sense of power or control. Students who clearly understand classroom rules and procedures and who understand what is to be learned and why it might be useful to them will experience a sense of power” (Jones & Jones, 2020, p. 34-35).



Current Strategies Used to Develop Classroom Rules

- ★ After the first few days of school I have a whole class discussion with my students and ask them what they would like our classroom to sound like, look like, and feel like.
- ★ I take what they tell me and rephrase it into short, positive sentences that state clearly what behaviors are expected.
- ★ I create a poster like the one to the left (from my 2019-2020 class) listing our rules and have them all sign in agreement.
- ★ I take a picture and post it to our ClassDojo story so that parents are aware of the expectations.
- ★ It is also posted on our bulletin board for the rest of the year to refer to and review.

What I would like to implement in the future : how can I improve?

- **Reviewing classroom rules throughout the year** (Jones & Jones, 2020).
  - I know that I do not do this enough. There are times when I remember to review our classroom rules because a majority of the class is misbehaving, but I know it could help prevent misbehaviors in the first place to periodically review the rules.
  - Here are some fun activities to help introduce the rules at the beginning of the year, and also review them later on.
    - Rule Unscramble : scramble the words of your classrooms rules and have students work together to unscramble them.
    - Rule Bingo : create a Bingo board of the classroom rules. The teacher or students will act out a rule and if the students have that rule on their board they cover it.
    - Hidden Rules : write a rule on a piece of paper, then fold it and on the outside write down clues for that rule. Students can read the clues and guess what they think the rule is.
    - Rewards : I give rewards to students during the year called “behavior buddies”. They don’t relate to our classroom rules however, so I think doing something similar to “behavior buddies” but with our classroom rules would be beneficial (Jones & Jones, 2020).

What I would like to implement in the future : how can I improve?

- **Setting up explicit consequences in advance (Malone & Tiejens, 2000)**
  - At the beginning of the year when we are establishing rules, I explain the consequences for breaking them. I tell my students that if you break a rule you first get a warning from me, and if you do not change your behavior you lose a dojo point.
  - I am very passionate about natural and logical consequences so I think it would be worthwhile to establish specific consequences for different rules and explicitly discuss them at the beginning of the school year, and even incorporate them in the activities to review rules from the previous slide.
  - “When a rule is broken, the consequences of breaking the rule must be known in advance. In this way a student chooses to break the rule fully cognizant of the consequences of his/her behavior. The teacher must then show consistency in administering the consequences agreed upon. In such an environment a student learns to accept responsibility for his/her own behavior as well as make decisions about acceptable behavior in a given situation,” (Malone & Tiejens, 2000, p. 5).

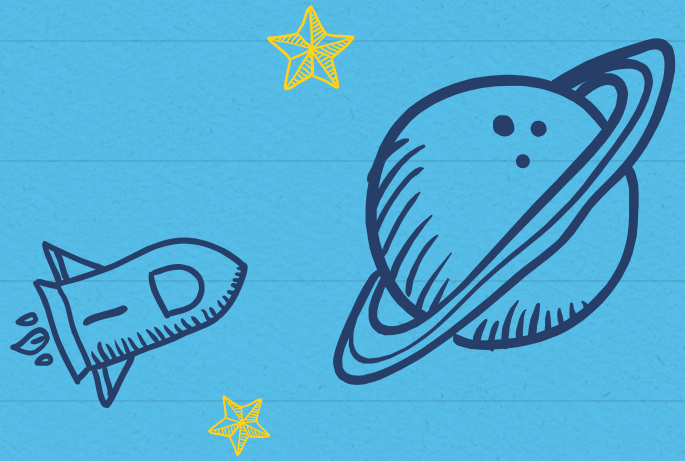
What I would like to implement in the future : how can I improve?

- **Setting up explicit consequences in advance (continued)**
  - Every year my classroom rules are a bit different because I create them with my students. Using the rules from my 2029-2020 class as an example, here are the specific consequences I would implement for each rule...
    - **We promise to be bucket fillers** : if students “dip” from somebody’s bucket a logical consequence would be to help that person they hurt or some other restitution act.
    - **We promise to quietly listen at the rug** : if students are talking or being disruptive during whole group instruction at the rug, a logical consequence would be to have them sit away from others at their table.
    - **We promise to make safe choices** : if students are not being safe with materials they should not be able to use that material. If students are not being safe with others (hurting them) some sort of restitution should take place. Asking thow they can help is a great place to start.
    - **We promise to take care of our classroom** : this would be similar to the making safe choices rule. If a student is being disrespectful to materials they won’t be able to use them.
    - **We promise to encourage everyone to try new things** : this is a rule we made to support a positive learning environment. I don’t think a consequence for not doing this would be appropriate.

What I would like to implement in the future : how can I improve?

- **Setting up explicit consequences in advance (continued)**
  - I've realized after writing specific consequences to each rule, that those are things I do in the classroom already. The difference with what I plan to do in the future is to thoroughly explain each consequence and what restitution means at the beginning of the year, and continue to review these concepts as needed. This way students will already know what the consequence for breaking each rule is and I will be able to be more consistent.

3. Family Communication



“Making the effort to communicate with your students’ families sends a powerful message that you want to include them in what happens at school,” (Sprick, Garrison & Howard, 1998, p. 51).

Current Strategies Used to Communicate with Families

- **Initial contact with families**
  - Before school begins I send a welcome packet to my students' homes as well as a meet the teacher letter to introduce myself.
  - On the first day of school I send a "first day of first grade" picture of each student to their parents to let them know how their day went and how excited I am to be their child's teacher.
- **General contact**
  - Curriculum Night in September.
  - Posting pictures to the class story on our ClassDojo website.
  - Weekly update emails to keep families informed of what's going on at school.
  - Monthly newsletters.

Current Strategies Used to Communicate with Families

- **Individual contact**
  - Parent-teacher conferences in November.
  - Parents who connect through the ClassDojo website or app will get notifications and view in real time points their child is earning or losing.
  - There is also a messaging feature on the ClassDojo app I use when I need to discuss anything with parents or ask questions.
  - I do call parents if there is ever an issue I want to discuss, or if they reach out wanting to discuss something with me.
  - If needed, I schedule in-person meetings to discuss serious issues.

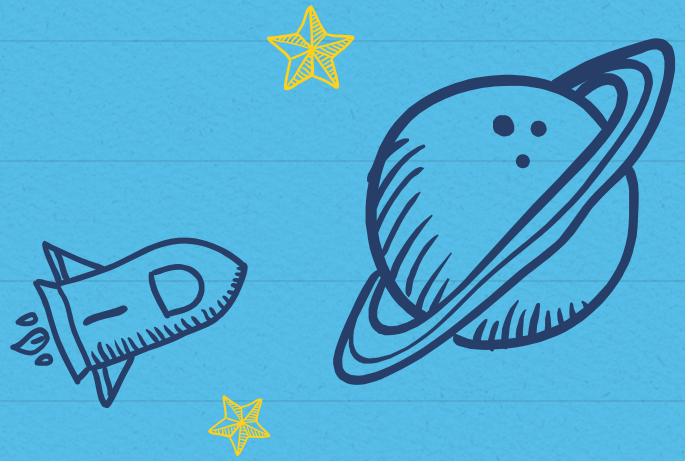
What I would like to implement in the future : How can I improve?

- **Phone Contact (Sprick, Garrison & Howard, 1998)**
  - We live in an age where technology rules and it is so convenient to send an email or instant message rather than taking the time to make a phone call. I am guilty of only calling families on the phone if there is a serious issue and I would like to change that.
  - Starting next school year I would like to take a few minutes after school each day to call 1 or 2 student's families and check in and see how things are going so far. I will make it a goal to call each of my students' parents by the end of September.
- **Positive Notes Home**
  - I would like to make it a goal to send a positive and personal note home for at least one student every day. I usually have around 25 students so that means in a month I would be able to make a positive contact with almost all of my students' families and by the end of the year I'll be able to do that at least 7 times for each child.

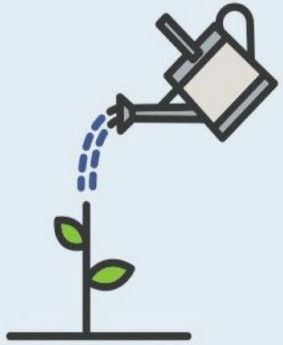
What I would like to implement in the future : how can I improve?

- By making a point to make parents aware of all of the great things their children do at school, they will be more willing to be understanding when issues arise.
- “Such efforts increase the probability that an individual student’s family will be receptive should you need to inform them about and enlist their assistance in solving the student’s behavioral or academic problem,” (Sprick, Garrison & Howard, 1998, p.51-52).

4. Student Motivation



“Most people will work harder for a teacher or boss who is personable and respectful,” (Sprick, Garrison & Howard, 1998, p. 279).



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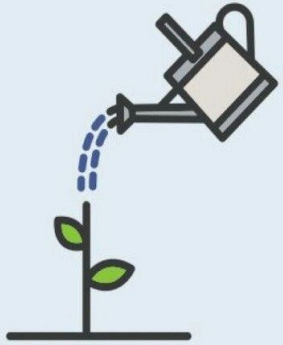
Current Strategies Used to Increase Student Motivation

- **Creating/adapting lessons that involve things students are interested in**
  - Last year a lot of my students loved to play the video game Fortnite. For one of our math units we focus on collecting and analyzing data, so we came up with a survey question about Fortnite, asked the other first grade classrooms, and created a bar graph using the data we collected.
- **Positive student relationships**
  - This was discussed at the beginning of this project and something I am very passionate about.
- **Meaningful learning objectives**
  - For each subject I teach that day I start our lesson by explaining the learning objective and *why* it is important to learn what we are learning.



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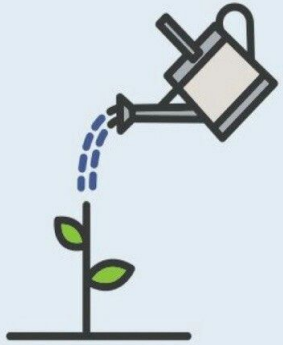
Current Strategies Used to Increase Student Motivation

- **Mini Lessons (teacher instruction)**
  - I try my best to limit my whole-group teacher instruction time to a maximum of 15 minutes at a time. I want my students to be as engaged in their learning process as possible and that means (especially for my active first graders) less time listening to me and more time doing activities.
- **Incorporating Choice**
  - Whenever it is possible I allow my students to make a choice. Whether that means choosing what books to read, topics to write about, tasks to work on, or materials to use, I make it a priority for students to feel that they have control over their learning.
- **My Own Passion for Learning**
  - I am not afraid to get animated and show students how I love to explore and learn new things.



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Current Strategies Used to Increase Student Motivation

- **Experiencing Success**
  - In order to make sure my students see themselves as capable learners, they have to experience some sort of success. Most of the time that means differentiating instruction...
    - Allowing students to choose certain tasks that are just right for them.
    - Having students shop for books that are at their "just right" reading level.
    - Strategy groups for reading.
    - Guided reading groups.
    - Small groups for math activities.
    - Individual reading goals (chosen by students).
- **Feedback**
  - I have a writing conferring system where I work individually with each student at least twice per writing unit (about 3 students per day) and provide specific verbal feedback on their writing.

What I would like to implement in the future : how can I improve?

- **Immediate and realistic feedback (Jones & Jones, 2020)**
  - Although I informally give students feedback for various academic tasks when working independently or in small groups, I would like to be more methodical about giving feedback and do something similar to my writing conferring system mentioned in the previous slide.
  - I am thinking I'd like to keep a checklist to help make sure I am providing academic feedback to all of my students in all subject areas.
  - Since my students are so young I think verbal rather than written feedback is much more appropriate.
- **Intermittent Celebrations (Sprick, Garrison & Howard, 1998)**
  - In my classroom I use special and funny cheers when students share show and tells, or when there are guest readers. I'd like to start using these to celebrate when students have mastered a skill, tried something new, or other academic accomplishments.
  - "Provide some sort of positive feedback that lets them know they have accomplished something special. Create a sense of celebration about what they accomplished," (p. 294)

What I would like to implement in the future : how can I improve?

- **Multiple Intelligence in the classroom**
  - In my research, I came across an interesting article that compares Dewey's educational theory and Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences in the context of education. Both theorists argue that, "[The] teacher should create or adapt different teaching strategies that will be compatible to the students' individual differences and the material they study" (Leshkovska & Spaseva, 2016, p. 65). Gardner gets more specific by detailing the different kinds of intelligences teachers should aim to differentiate for.
  - Here are the 8 different types of intelligences and strategies I could use to make sure all students experience learning in a way that caters to their most dominant intelligence (Jones & Jones, 2020).
    - **Social/Interpersonal**
      - Learns best working with others
      - Peer tutoring
      - Cooperative projects
      - Think-Pair-Share

What I would like to implement in the future : how can I improve?

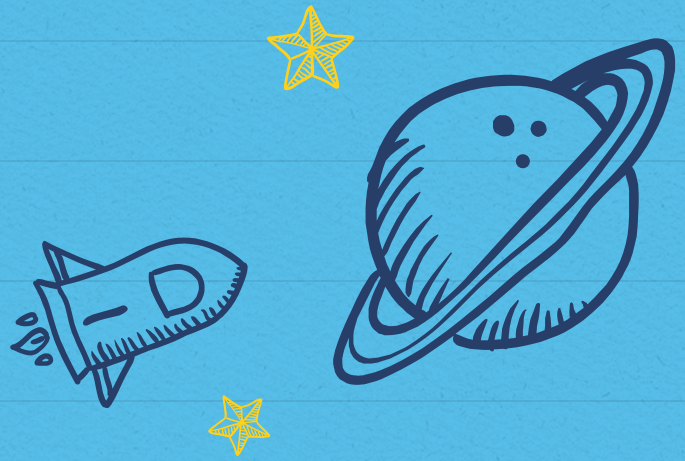
- **Verbal/Linguistic** (Learns best through written or spoken word)
  - Storytelling
  - Reading/Writing
- **Visual/Spatial** (Learns best when seeing or creating images)
  - Short videos introducing concepts
  - Showing pictures/graphs/maps
  - Chalk Talks with drawing pictures
- **Bodily/Kinesthetic** (Learns best through physical movement)
  - Activity stations
  - Role playing
  - STEM building activities
- **Logical/Mathematical** (Learns best through cause/effect experiences)
  - Creating graphs/analyzing data
  - Identifying patterns
  - Finding evidence to support claims

What I would like to implement in the future : how can I improve?

- **Musical** (Learns best through sounds, and rhythms)
  - Writing poetry
  - Singing/writing songs
- **Intrapersonal** (Learns best through self-reflection and metacognition)
  - Independent work
  - Self-assessments
  - Journaling/brainstorming
- **Naturalistic** (Learns best through connections to environment and nature)
  - Conducting experiments
  - Outdoor/environmental activities
  - Creating categories and problem solving

- Each student is unique and is made up of many intelligences varying in dominance so it is important that I work hard to incorporate strategies from all of the intelligences into my instruction throughout the year (Jones & Jones, 2020).

5. Behavior Intervention



"A student's challenging behavior often reflects a mismatch between his or her current skill set and what the environment is asking of the student," (Jones & Jones, 2020, p. 17).

Past Behavior Intervention Strategies

- In my short career as an educator, I have had to create individual behavior plans for 4 students.
  - All incorporated earning rewards for demonstrating a desired behavior through a point system.
  - Example #1
  - Example #2
  - Example #3
  - Example #4

Student names have been changed to pseudonyms

Past Behavior Intervention Strategies

- Individual behavior plans have been a last resort for students who have displayed challenging behavior in my classroom and have not responded to other interventions.
- All behavior plans I have created were with the help of our school social worker.
- I have also had a situation where a student had a behavior plan in Kindergarten and it was decided it would be best for him to continue on with that plan with me in First Grade.

What I would like to implement in the future : how can I improve?

- Assuming that I implement the strategies outlined for all the aspects of classroom management that are being analyzed in this project, many difficult or disruptive behaviors will be prevented.
- Nonetheless, there will always be students that are in need of further behavioral support to make sure they will experience success in the classroom.
- I'd like to improve on my skills identifying the function of behavior in order to develop plans that address that function. This has been a goal of mine since I took CEP 841: Classroom Management in the Inclusive Classroom last summer. A huge part of that class was understanding that ALL behavior has a function and that really resonated with me as a teacher because it was something that I had neglected in the past.
- A colleague once told me that behavior is communication that just needs to be translated. I always try to approach any challenging behavior with that thought.

What I would like to implement in the future : how can I improve?

- **Identifying Functions of Behavior**
  - “Since all behavior is functional (i.e., it serves a function for the student), a professional and effective way to consider student behavior is to think about what is happening in the classroom that is causing the student to believe he or she can get more attention or experience more success from the disruptive behavior than by being productively involved in the learning activity,” (Jones & Jones, 2020, p. 353).
  - To me this means becoming more proficient in collecting and analyzing behavioral data in a formal manner when it comes to truly difficult and disruptive behavior.

What I would like to implement in the future : how can I improve?

- **Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA)**
  - I plan to use this Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) to assist me in collecting data, organizing my thoughts and ideas, and structuring a well informed plan to move forward in providing the appropriate support to students.
  - FBAs are a product framed around the theory of Behaviorism (Albert, 2020). While Behaviorism is based on the following assumptions, “(1) behavior is influenced by the antecedents and consequences associated with the behavior, (2) behavior change programs must focus on specific, observable behavior, and (3) data collection is necessary to in order to alter behavior thoughtfully and systematically,” (Jones & Jones, 2020, p. 351).

Reflecting on Analyzing my own Classroom Management Style

- **Challenges**
  - It was difficult at times to stay objective while analyzing aspects of my classroom management because it is something that I work so hard for. I began to realize that there were parts in this project where it was beneficial to be honest and self-reflective because I wanted this project to assist me professionally while still showcasing what I've learned about classroom management while taking this course.
  - I also found challenges in locating reliable and helpful references for this project. I tried to use our course textbooks to judge the outside resources and their credibility. If the main ideas of the articles lined up with those in this course, I felt like the resource was viable.
- **Benefits**
  - I rarely get to self-evaluate myself as an educator as I am always being evaluated by an administrator. I think it was a great experience to look specifically at 5 major aspects of my own classroom management and utilize methods I learned in this course to improve my practices.

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