

Managing my Future Classroom- An Investigation

Middle school can be a difficult experience for young adolescents as well as teachers. A middle school student undergoes a lot of change over the course of the year and teachers face an abundance of challenges. A key aspect of being successful in middle school is developing classroom management. Classroom management refers to students that are deeply involved in instruction, a classroom that is work-oriented and pleasant, and activities that have little to no disruption or wasted time. Before students can be truly comfortable, they must know there is some system or structure in the classroom by which to abide. The Association of Middle Level Educators developed a handbook titled *This We Believe* that encourages middle grades teachers to consider the middle school concept when developing a successful classroom. This includes being responsive to the developmental domains--psychological, physical, social-emotional, moral, and cognitive aspects of each student. This leads to the question of how will I manage the needs of roughly thirty students at a time and over a hundred different students a day?

Middle Grades Musings is a publication by Campbell University's Middle Level Program.

To contribute to a future *Musing*, please contact Dr. Lorae Roukema, editor, at roukema@campbell.edu.



I have been in a field experience titled *Teaching in the Middle* with Campbell University for roughly 15 weeks. We have visited several local middle schools over the course of the semester. Every middle school teacher or administrator I have spoken with says that classroom management in some form is the hardest for middle school teachers to tackle. One

school even encourages teachers to meet with an assigned instructional coach and work within their specific teams to develop classroom management skills. So, what are some ways to develop classroom management?

I have investigated two major steps in successful classroom management. Knowing your students should be the first step in classroom management. This creates all ranges of questions such as do your students have troubled home lives, did they eat enough breakfast, did they get in an argument with their friends today, or do they love to play soccer? Answers to these questions can contribute to the behaviors and reactions of many young adolescent students. *This We Believe* suggests that developing relationships with students leads to less classroom behavior problems and improves academic success. A personal relationship helps meet the needs of young adolescents so learning can take place.

The second step investigated was relevant social interaction. During the field experience, an interview was conducted about middle schoolers in general with several randomly selected young adolescents. A major theme in the young adolescent's response was teachers not allowing students to talk and engage with their peers. This may be the opposite of what middle grades teachers think about when developing a classroom management plan, however, social interaction is an important developmental need for this age group.

Does allowing social interaction actually improve the classroom environment? *This We Believe* says that within the developmental domains, middle school students need social interaction and first-hand experiences. Expected behaviors and responsible decisions can be modeled in class activities and instructional exercises. This allows students to freely use their own voice and understand expectations to develop a well-managed classroom.

Though I am not a teacher yet, classroom management is a major area about which I am concerned. It seems very important to develop specific strategies and procedures for classroom management early on, but I have to remember the two steps that I've investigated as foundational for successfully managing my future classroom.

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