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| Managing Learning in Urban Classrooms |
| EDU 615 – Folio Metropolitan State UniversityNatalie Rasmussen, Ph.D.Spring 2012 |
| Vance Holmes |

**Vance Holmes**

*Managing Learning in Urban Classrooms*

***Portfolio*** of artifacts which constitute clear evidence of my appropriate conceptual knowledge of, and mastery level competence in, the general methods of effective classroom management and instructional planning at the level required of an urban middle school or high school educator -- as outlined in the syllabus for Metropolitan State University course: **EDU-615**.

Folio Index

**Caring, Cooperation and Culture** – Interpersonal Behavior 2

**The Complex Classroom** – **Day One**  12

**Relationships By Design** **–** Urban Classroom Management 18

**Routine Maintenance** **–** Five Essential Routines 24

**Differentiated Instruction –** LessonPlan and Notes 29

**Family-Teacher Relationships** in Diverse Urban Schools 35

**Quality Time Management** – Lesson Plan and Notes 46

**Learning Diversity** **–** Multiple Intelligences/Learning Styles 52

**Managing Independent Work** **–** LessonPlan and Notes 57

**Variations on a Team**: Cooperative Options 62

**Six Thinking Caps** **–** Discussion Management Strategy 68

**Conquering Classroom Fears**: Reflection, Proactivity, Power 71

**Authoritative Management** of the Diverse Urban Classroom 76

Caring, Cooperation and Culture:Teacher Interpersonal Behavior Assessment Report

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Metropolitan State University

EDU 615

Managing Learning in Urban 5-12 Classrooms
Advanced Theory and Practice

Natalie Rasmussen, Ph.D.

January 17, 2012

**Caring, Cooperation and Culture:** Teacher Interpersonal Behavior Assessment Report

C

lassroom management dispositional approaches are diagramed in the complex, *Teacher Interpersonal Behavior Chart* (TIBC). The eight different relational types represented include all of the possible combinations in a dynamic between oppositional, dictatorial and unresponsive – to cooperative and affectionate but undemanding. In *Middle and Secondary Classroom Management*, Carol Simon Weinstein and Ingrid Novodvorsky explain that when the four instructors featured in the text speak about classroom management, “they rarely use the words discipline, punishment, confrontation or penalty” (2011). Instead, the instructors emphasize the importance of being organized and well prepared, and they talk of helping students achieve. In thinking about the TIBC then, the teacher types examined here are all assessed to be situated on the right (cooperative) side of the chart. The task of assigning interpersonal behavior characteristics to the instructors is further simplified by the authors’ description of them as a group of educators who stress mutual respect, personal involvement, and the need to develop a “caring community” – which the authors explicitly define as a group where “all individuals are contributing, valued members.” So the styles of the four teachers – Fred Cerequas, Donnie Collins, Sandy Krupinski and Christina Lugo Vreeland – are all situated somewhere near the mid-point (between helpful and understanding) of the TIBC.

"When someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked in the mirror and saw nothing."

– **Adrienne Rich**

**Caring**

Weinstein and Novodvorsky point out that the effective classroom managers highlighted in their text create disciplined, orderly, productive environments by treating learners with warmth and respect. The data suggests that classroom order is maintained, not through rule-making and insistence on obedience, but through care-ful and thought-ful connection to learners as a group of personally valued individuals. The opposite of chaos, it seems, is caring and cooperation. “Common sense tells us that students are more likely to cooperate with teachers who are seen as responsive, trustworthy, and respectful,” Weinstein and Novodvorsky write, “and research consistently shows this to be true.” Assessment of the book’s basic teacher profiles finds that the instructors’ dispositional approaches can be placed in one of two categories: *Cooperation - Dominance* (*helping*) and *Cooperation - Submission* (*understanding*).

**Understanding Teachers**

**Fred Cerequas**

Mr. Cerequas teaches social studies in a growing district of 7,500 students. The student population is diverse; it is now 64 percent European American, 20 percent Asian American, 10 percent African American, and 6 percent Latino. More than 50 different first languages are spoken within the district student body -- and the socioeconomic range is quite large.

**TIB Profile: *Cooperation Dominance* –** (*helping / integrity*)

“I believe real teachers are cultivators,” Cerequas says, adding -- “They nurture the seeds of wisdom in their students by helping them become independent, eager learners who combine experience and knowledge with the genuine concern for others that gives life its meaning.”

**Sandy Krupinski**

Ms. Krupinski, a chemistry instructor, teaches in a mid-sized district. The student population of 1,650 is 53 percent European American, 17 percent African American, 14 percent Latino, and 16 percent Asian American. About 26 percent of the children qualify for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program.

**TIB Profile: *Cooperation Dominance* –** (*helping / integrity*)

Sandy Krupinski attempts to create an accepting environment and a non-threatening atmosphere in her classroom. Noting that chemistry is often viewed as a difficult subject, she bemoans that many of her students begin the year thinking they cannot be successful. The teacher explains:

“They’ll come up to me with a blank paper and say, ‘I couldn’t do this, Mrs. K.’ I can’t stand that. My hope is that by the end of the year these students will have the confidence to attack problems and the ability to develop appropriate strategies. That’s much more important to me than getting the right answers.”

On the first day of school, for example, Ms. Krupinski gives her students an index card and asks them to answer four questions: (1) How do you learn best? (2) What do you expect to be excited about in chemistry? (3) What do you expect to be nervous about? and (4) What can I do to help?

**Donnie Collins**

Donnie Collins teaches mathematics in a mid-sized urban district that serves 6,500 students in 10 schools; 54 percent of the students are Latino and 41 percent are African American. Many of the learners come from low-income families with 80 percent of the students qualifying for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program. The socioeconomic conditions are described as having bred “other problems – drugs, transiency, homelessness, teenage pregnancy, physical abuse.”

**TIB Type: *Cooperation Submission* –** (*understanding*)

“I believe strongly in the importance of group work and peer tutoring so that students can learn to work together and to take constructive criticism,” says Ms. Collins. She encourages learners be creative and work hard, but confides:

“If you try to go ahead with a math lesson when they’re all riled up about something that has happened at home or in the neighborhood, you’re doomed. There’s just no point to it. It’s better to put away the quadratic equations and talk.”

**Christina Lugo Vreeland**

Christina Vreeland is an English teacher at a large high school in a large district. The student body is predominantly European American (61 percent), but ethnic and social diversity is steadily increasing (African American, 8 percent; Latino, 10 percent; Asian American, 20 percent; Native American, 1 percent). About 13 percent of learners qualify for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program.

**TIB Type: *Cooperation Submission*** – (*understanding*)

While Ms. Vreeland emphasizes the importance of being rigorous and systematic in her preparation, she is principally concerned about relationships and “the value of building communication and a sense of community.” Vreeland reveals:

“I think that lots of times English teachers are so passionate about literature and analysis of literature that we forget that our students are not preparing to be English teachers. . . . The way I read and the way my students read is different, and that’s okay. What I need to do is foster the kind of reading and writing that will be useful for them and to create the desire to read and write.”

“The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions, to say to himself this is black or this is white, to decide for himself whether there is a God in heaven or not. To ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions, is the way he achieves his own identity.”

– **James Baldwin**

**Cooperation**

**Thinking for Myself**

The *Cooperation Submission* (*understanding*) Teacher Interpersonal Behaviortype most closely describes the dispositional approach I would use to manage my classroom. As I see it, classroom management has one goal: maximizing individual learning opportunities. Urban classroom performance management (UCPM) is the process of creating and maintaining an environment in which each learner is empowered to perform to the best of his or her unique abilities. The process of scaffolding involves the educator’s gradual release of responsibility – and while directives and guidance are important, ultimately the key is to encourage, understand, “stand under” and support learners’ ability to think for themselves.

**Expect Excellence**

At the core of UCPM is the so-called Pygmalion Effect – the concept that students mirror their teacher's expectations. Teacher expectations -- communicated in verbal and nonverbal ways -- directly influence student behavior and performance. Beliefs have consequences. To be effective, the urban educator must have high expectations for learners as individuals and believe in their success. My vision of quality UCPM would also include the following core components:

* Community rules and general expectations are established, evaluated and equitably observed.
* Identify and eliminate prejudice, cultural stereotyping, bullying and discrimination.
* Individual performance objectives are explicitly stated, charted and analyzed.
* Feedback to each learner occurs regularly.
* Engaging and challenging content that is presented in the context of students’ real lives and real-world experiences will prevent discipline problems.
* Learners are directly challenged to connect to content with accomplishment-based performance standards, outcomes, and measures.
* Familiar frameworks, processes and systems are provided in a consistent schedule.

My particular Teacher Interpersonal Behavior approach will likely have both positive and negative results in the effective management of my classroom, but years of teaching experience prompts me to insist that the positive will far outweigh the negative. The obvious drawback to the Cooperation-Submission model is becoming overly submissive and permissive – an attitude which does not foster growth. A balance between guiding and supporting is needed. This is why, of the four teachers, I feel a special kinship with Christina Lugo Vreeland. I most identify with the English teacher’s balanced disposition and attitude. Although she is very focused on building relationships and an accommodating sense of community, Ms. Vreeland seems equally determined to lead her learners through high expectations and a demanding program of study.

**Cultural Connections**

My multicultural orientation – age, gender, affectional preference, socioeconomic status and ethnic identity – are central to my professional beliefs, my educational philosophy and my personal goal of cultural competence.

Although I physically attended high school, I was absent in every other respect. I drifted through the hallways and went through the motions in math, language and history classes, but mentally and emotionally – I never attended high school. Thinking back, I suppose I felt the things I was learning had little to do with me. I skipped school because school skipped me. My culture – my understandings, perceptions, truths – were largely absent from the curriculum and classroom materials. If Black people were ever mentioned in class it was usually some embarrassing lesson on slavery or the civil war. I had not consciously put this all together at the time, but instinctively, I knew from the earliest grades, to take anything said or done in school with a grain of salt – and insult.

Most of my African-American friends had the same disjointed, un-connected attitudes. The school had no place in our neighborhood. We rarely talked about school. When we did, it was only to complain or curse it. School was not discussed as a place of learning, but rather, as a big building which was blocking out our sun. We had better things to do. It seems clear to me now that this attitude and ignorance was promoted by the fact that we had only ever been taught by White teachers in a middle-class, hetero-normative environment. Our culture, our heritage and history, was invisible. Our neighborhood had no place in the school.

I didn't have a Black teacher until my sophomore year in college. Until that point, being Black had nothing to do with being in school. The experience of having my first African American teacher was shocking. Beyond the fact that the professor was an intelligent Black woman, the course subject was completely new to me: African American history.

By the time I had received my undergraduate degree – I had re-educated and re-connected my culture to the world. I had not, however, been able to connect my culture to schooling. I understood that my people, my history, and my reality had been left out of mainstream scholarship – but I still assumed it was because people of color simply didn’t have much to do with important literature, math, history or science. It would be years before I could see the tie between scholarship and my own cultural identity.

"The great aim of education is not knowledge, but action."

– **Herbert Spencer**

Now, I have decided – I want to be the culturally competent high school teacher I never had. I want to introduce urban learners to diverse thinkers, philosophers, authors and artists. I want to help students construct the bridge between their cultural knowledge and their scholarly achievement. My personal experience and social perspective lead me to conclude that a multicultural curriculum and a culturally responsive classroom are the keys to effective urban classroom performance management and urban learner success.

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Weinstein, C.S., & Novodvorsky, I. (2011). *Middle and secondary classroom management: Lessons from research and practice* (4th ed). New York: McGraw-Hill.

The Complex Classroom / Day One

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EDU 615

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Advanced Theory and Practice

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The Complex Classroom / Day One

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**anaging the Complex Classroom**

In *Middle and Secondary Classroom Management*, Carol Simon Weinstein and Ingrid Novodvorsky, speaking on the complexity of the classroom, refer to the work of Walter Doyle. Doyle defines classroom management as “covering a wide range of teacher duties from distributing resources to students, accounting for student attendance and school property, enforcing compliance with rules and procedures to grouping students for instruction . . .” His research reveals six features of the classroom setting that make it complex:

* First, classrooms are characterized by **multidimensionality**.
* Second, many of these activities take place at the same time. This **simultaneity** makes the classroom a bit like a three- ring circus.
* A third characteristic of classrooms is the rapid pace at which things happen. Classroom events occur with an **immediacy** that makes it impossible to think through every action ahead of time.
* Classroom incidents . . . cannot always be anticipated, despite the most careful planning. This **unpredictability** is a fourth characteristic of class-rooms.
* The fifth characteristic of classrooms is the **lack of privacy**. Classrooms are remarkably public places.
* Finally, over the course of the academic year, classes construct a **joint history**. This sixth characteristic means that classes, like families, remember past events -- both positive and negative.

**Simultaneity**

Simultaneity is a feature I have personally witnessed in observations at Oak Grove Middle School in the classroom of Ms. L. Her 6th grade room was a bizarre delight. The atmosphere was calm and crazy, kooky and caring – all at the same time. I was amazed to see Ms. L’s expert juggling of the classroom's shifting, individual student schedules and student needs.

Perhaps the best method for dealing with simultaneity is to plan for it and use it to promote a *collaborative classroom*. This can be accomplished through small-group project work where teams of learners are encouraged to take responsibility for self-monitoring, self-adjusting and self-assessing. Unique group activities are established so that students assist each other in approaching and demonstrating mastery of content. While having so many different projects being developed simultaneously within one classroom can take on a “three-ring circus” atmosphere, through careful use of learning targets and rubrics, small group project-based learning can be extremely efficient. Planning for controlled chaos turns classroom simultaneity into an advantage.

**Day One Agenda – 12 Grade Language Arts**

00 | Greeting:

Prominently post name, room number, class period and course title. Meet and warmly greet learners at the door – prior to class. Immediately establish that the right students are in the right classroom – and welcome them.

00 | Roll Call:

Invite learners to self-select seats. Once the session is introduced, take roll – creating a quick seating chart while asking each learner what name they prefer to be called.

05 | Schedule:

Direct students’ attention to a pre-posted, itemized list of activities that describe what is going to happen on this first day.

10 | Learner Information Cards:

Have learners complete an information sheet that includes their name, address, home telephone number and cell phone numbers of parents or caregivers. Other requested information: favorite subjects, books, music, movies, magazines, hobbies, and out-of-school activities or work.

15 | Safety First:

Review relevant school safety policy and safety rules specific to the classroom, stressing: students are to be sitting quietly in their seats when the bell rings; students are never to run or rough-house in the room; the teacher, not the bell, will dismiss the class. Explain that classroom community rules will be discussed, agreed upon and established in coming sessions, but that school safety regulations and procedures constitute a non-negotiable policy.

20 | Goals:

Review the subject matter and broad goals of the class. Discuss the assessment system and assignment expectations, and describe the first lessons.

25 | Preferred Learning Styles:

Explain the need take each individual student’s skills, interests and preferred learning styles into account. Invite learners to complete a Quick-Write questionnaire.

35 | Teacher Background:

Share ideas about teaching style and some professional and personal interests.

40 | Close:

Preview the first lesson and point to what learners need to do for the next session. Make a point of formally dismissing the class.

**Lesson Plan Justification**

Demanding completion of a first-day assignment – either in-class or “homework” – is not productive, since the lesson can’t possibly have any scholarly context or connection to a room of complete strangers. A “homework” assignment on Day One is not only pointless pedagogically, it can also be off-putting. For one thing, increasing numbers of young people in urban communities are homeless, so assumptions about home and (so-called) “homework” are to be rejected. While a Day One assignment is perhaps part of a well-intentioned plan to “start getting work done,” that objective is not aligned with the learners' needs on the first day of school.

Effective classroom management is centered on fostering relationships not enforcing rules. Positive, rewarding relationships do not begin with laying down a list of regulations and demands. The Day One listing of rules implies that knowing and obeying them is more important than acknowledging their purpose and observing “the spirit of the law.” Most importantly, the universe of issues related to rules, responsibilities and obligations goes to the heart of community. The entire first week (at least!) should be spent establishing, not just our mandates, but our mission. Learners who have a voice in establishing the rules are much more likely to internalize, support and enforce those rules.

Certainly, the Quick-Write constitutes a learning activity in a language arts class, and the task could be extended into an out-of-class independent study (“homework”) assignment.

**Quick-Write Prompts**

Using as much detail as possible, write your responses to the following questions:

*1. What are your expectations of a good teacher?*

*2. Tell me about the best teacher you've ever had. What made that person such a good teacher?*

*3. Tell me about how you learn best. Give me an example of a project or unit where you learned a lot. Describe the project in detail.*

Relationships By Design:

Two Plans for Urban Classroom Management

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Advanced Theory and Practice

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**Relationships By Design**:

Two Plans for Urban Classroom Management

*Plan One*:Positive Relationships - Positive Results

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uccessful management in the diverse urban classroom – management that fosters individual student learning and growth – depends on my readiness, willingness and ability as an urban educator to cultivate positive relationships. Learning is a deeply personal, deeply human endeavor. As a reflective practitioner, I remain aware of my role as an unconditional supporter of still-growing, still-forming adolescents who are sensitive and often emotionally vulnerable human beings. While good classroom management serves to create an orderly environment, conducive to academic advancement – “it also aims to enhance students’ social and emotional growth” (Weinstein & Novodvorsky). So, *how* I achieve order in the learning community is of equal importance to *whether* I achieve it. The educational and social - emotional growth of urban learners is not fostered by rules and a one-size-fits-all regiment, but rather by nurturing, culturally-connected teacher/student and student/student relationships.

I will begin building positive teacher/student relationships through adherence to Alfie Kohn’s rule (Weinstein & Novodvorsky). Kohn suggests teachers start each school year by openly asking learners about ways of building feelings of safety:

A teacher might say, “Look, it’s really important to me that you feel free to say things, to come up with ideas that may sound weird, to make mistakes – and not to be afraid that other people are going to laugh at you. In fact, I want everyone in here to feel that way. What do you think we can do to make sure that happens?”

Moving forward in the school year, I will continue to hold open class discussions. I will devise other ways for learners to provide feedback about their perceptions of my classroom as a safe place that promotes caring and respect.

In order to be an effective urban classroom manager I must have the skills to develop supportive and rewarding relationships with learners that have cultural backgrounds and social perspectives different than my own. Urban learners are more likely to cooperate and contribute to a smooth running classroom if they see me as a respectful educator who acknowledges individual cultural identity. As coach to a diverse group of young people, I will endeavor to be a culturally competent manager in a linguistically inclusive and culturally responsive classroom. I will be sensitive to students’ real lives and real-world concerns as individuals. Using in-class and after-school sessions, I will provide forums for learners to express their feelings and experiences – and at all times, strive to be a resource in support of young people’s self-advocacy.

To be a productive urban classroom manager, I must also cultivate caring and respect in diverse urban learners’ relationships with each other. I can do this by viewing time spent on community building – not as a separate intrusion on my academic literacy instruction – but as central to it! Through a program of standards-based, authentic project assessments, I can use cooperative learning groups to maximize opportunities for students to learn from one another (Weinstein & Novodvorsky). I will establish and enforce clear expectations for behavior, specifically as it relates to stereotyping, prejudice, gender bashing, gay bashing, bullying, bigotry and discrimination. Through lesson planning, I will carefully connect curriculum to community, culture and social justice. I will also be vigilant about instruction in the un-planned “teachable moments” when expectations of cultural competence and respect for diversity are challenged by negative words or actions in the classroom.

*Plan Two*:Designing the Ideal Urban Literacy Workshop

Along with reading and writing literature, urban language arts learners discuss, debate, present and perform literature as well. The key then, to a successful physical arrangement for the language arts classroom, is a multi-purpose design that facilitates the transition between various solo and group activities. The space should be viewed as a **multi-use, multi-literacy** **workshop** that can easily and efficiently be transformed to support a variety of activities.

* The ideal workshop has ample storage so that the space can remain clutter-free. Exactly where and how materials are stored requires a great deal of cleverness in design and pre-planning. In a short class period, minimizing activity transition time is critical, and requires a system. What prevents us from our work – becomes our work!
* While it is tempting to busy up a room with posters, flyers, artwork and various items – a haphazard mess of color on the walls, while perhaps stimulating, can also be an anxiety producing bombardment of visual noise. Consistency counter-acts confusion. The ideal workshop has neutral vertical space that can be utilized and then, like the floor, be quickly made clutter-free again. The urban educator can model good organizational skills by posting learning targets and important information in a consistent place. Considering that the workshop often acts as a gallery, it also makes sense to establish a consistent area to display and exhibit student products.
* Live plants improve indoor air quality, stabilize humidity, and supply energy to a room. When well-attended, plants can rightly serve as the defining element in a space devoted to growth. Without delving too deeply into the principals of Feng Shui, the thoughtful placement of Areca Palm, Lady Palm, English Ivy and Boston Fern can literally clear the air!
* We know that music has the power to shape our atmosphere and to soothe our hearts and minds. But researchers have found that certain music types can specifically “ease our brainwaves into the relaxed alpha state that is ideal for learning” (Baroque Music Homepage). One form of this ideal learning music can be found in the adagio movements of many baroque composers. Consistent, ritualized use of this and other types of music in the literacy workshop can allow for an alpha state of mind, improved moods – and perhaps act as a source of cultural connection for students.
* In a space uncluttered by extraneous items, desks can be quickly grouped to suit changing needs. For safety’s sake and other reasons, it seems appropriate to establish a “home” position for desks, tables, computers or other equipment – a familiar arrangement from which all other configurations begin and return. Perhaps the most useful home arrangement in the literacy workshop would consist of four rows of desks facing in to the center of the room – with a wide center aisle.



Graphic made using *Classroom Architect* [http://classroom.4teachers.org/].

Routine Maintenance

for the Urban High School Language Arts Classroom

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Managing Learning in Urban 5-12 Classrooms
Advanced Theory and Practice

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**Routine Maintenance**
for the Urban High School Language Arts Classroom

Charted here are five essential routines designed for a classroom of diverse, urban, grade 11-12, language arts learners.

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| **V.** Regular review of basic school policy and **classroom safety rules**, namely: students are to be sitting quietly in their seats when the bell rings; students are never to run or rough-house in the room; the teacher, not the bell, will dismiss the class. |
| ***Modeling*** | I will personally observe school safety rules at all times. I will carefully explain and teach classroom safety rules. Class will begin promptly. I will be organized – and consistently prepared – in order to limit off-task time. |
| ***Communication*** | Along with an initial discussion, I would use a hand-out and a syllabus with a parent–student–teacher contract. Early in the year, I would incorporate these rules into a safety poster project for each class. The most effective poster(s) would be given a prominent place in the classroom. Also, I would do at least one other safety-related project early in the school year, perhaps a video or live drama project that allows learners to explore various safety scenarios and behaviors in the classroom. |
| ***Purpose/Rationale*** | Learners must harbor the most basic feelings of safety, both physically and emotionally, if they are to feel free enough to explore and discover new worlds. A river without banks is just a pool of water! Forward momentum requires a secure system of boundaries. Moreover – fights, fires, sudden health crises and other unexpected emergencies do happen – and even a small event can threaten the group’s physical safety if the situation is not handled in a calm and orderly manner. |
| ***Consequences*** | Caught making the mistake of running, or some other physically inappropriate behavior, a student would probably just be asked to “get control.” However, a potentially dangerous or violent action may result in removal, or perhaps escalate to detention – depending on the situation. Latecomers will politely be asked to sit to the side and complete an “Admit Ticket” before joining class. Recovering missed instruction or information is the responsibility of the learner. Access to information and assignments will be available in my published syllabus, my website – and (ideally) through the school’s student intranet system. Any late or missed work is . . . still due! Excellence is expected. If necessary, a new schedule of assignments will be fashioned. No learner will be permitted to work beneath his or her privilege. In certain cases, a personal meeting with a student may be required to discuss the reason for daily tiredness, tardiness or absence. A schedule of alternate, differentiated assessments would then be devised to allow for the exceptions of a learner with special personal issues. When possible, parents or caregivers would be involved in a learning plan that accommodates the student’s social circumstances while still enabling academic demonstration of mastery of course targets. |

"One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child."

– Carl Jung

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| **IV.** **Community Building Sessions** / “Suggestion Box”We will have structured, semi-monthly forums focusing on community. Topics for discussion will either be prepared by me or come from the classroom “Suggestion Box.” |
| ***Modeling*** | I will strive to consistently demonstrate cultural competence and promote civic consciousness, in and out of my classroom. I will journal to reflect on my work as an *ethnographer* of the language and literacy practices in the neighborhoods and homes of my students. |
| ***Communication*** | An approximate schedule of sessions will be made available in a course syllabus. Depending on circumstances, these community building sessions can be held more or less frequently than scheduled. A secure mail box for suggestions will be clearly labeled and situated in a conspicuous place in the room. |
| ***Purpose/Rationale*** | Content is most effectively delivered within the context of community. Discussion forums not only give students a chance to voice their opinions – they provide a concrete opportunity to improve speaking, listening and civic literacy skills. Also, a “Suggestion Box” is a simple and direct invitation for learners to communicate concerns, questions and ideas in writing. |
| ***Consequences*** | There are no punitive consequences needed since this is a routine and not a rule. I would expect everyone to participate in these sessions. If necessary, we can use a “talking stick,” establish seminar rules, or find some other way to encourage full and fair participation. |

"Once children learn how to learn, nothing is going to narrow their mind. The essence of teaching is to make learning contagious, to have one idea spark another."

– Marva Collins

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| **III.** Each class period will begin with an **“Admit Ticket”** and end with an **“Exit Slip.”** |
| ***Modeling*** | I, too, will participate in these parts of the lesson. When appropriate, I will share my reflective writing with students. |
| ***Communication*** | This system would be detailed in my syllabus and then, obviously, be communicated through the daily exercises themselves. The value of the routine of Quick-Writes would be made clear to students through periodic sharings and reflection on their written work. It would be my hope to incorporate online blogs (if we have access to PC equipment) so learners can journal and record their thoughts in one place. |
| ***Purpose/Rationale*** | Writing is thinking! The more a student writes, the better a writer he or she will be. Practice may not make perfect, but it makes sense. The secret to writing? Time spent – BIC (“Bottom In Chair”). The Admit and Exit slips also serve the purpose of ritualizing learner “preflection” and reflection – while providing a routine for getting class started on time. |
| ***Consequences*** | There are no punitive consequences here as this is part of my daily lesson routine. If, for some reason, expectations were not being met, an alternate opening and closing instructional strategy would be employed. |

“The great end of education is to discipline rather than to furnish the mind; to train it to the use of its own powers rather than to fill it with the accumulation of others."

– Tyron Edwards

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| **II.** **Self -Assessment System** for Continuous Quality Improvement Lessons will routinely follow a systematic, *Assessment for Learning* schedule. |
| ***Modeling*** | As an urban educator, I can model good organizational skills by clearly writing and posting learning targets at every session. |
| ***Communication*** | I will be explicit in my utilization of a standards-based map of learning targets, formative assessments, activities and tests. Unit targets and unit rubrics will be available on paper and through top-of-the-unit discussions. I will manage and update a student progress website where learners can monitor their own progress. |
| ***Purpose/Rationale*** | To maximize individual academic achievement in a classroom of diverse learners there must be a focus on academic literacy. This means continuing instruction on self-assessment strategies and organization skills, and providing learners with clear, forward-directed feedback. |
| ***Consequences*** | There are the “natural” consequences of a learner not working up to her or his potential. Hopefully, a solid system of self-assessment will encourage and empower students to take ownership of their learning.  |

“Culturally relevant teaching [describes] a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.”

– Gloria Ladson-Billings

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| **I.** **Respect** for the value of each unique member of the learning community regardless of ethnic, cultural or social identity differences.  |
| ***Modeling*** | I will attend to the lesson-planning principles of Differentiated Instruction (DI) and utilize the research-based Understanding by Design (UbD) model. |
| ***Communication*** | In written hand-outs and in ongoing discussions, I will establish clear expectations for behavior in regards to stereotyping, prejudice, gender bashing, gay bashing, bullying, bigotry and discrimination. Through use of culturally relevant materials in a culturally responsive classroom, I will make explicit the connections between education, equity and empowerment. |
| ***Purpose/Rationale*** | Each student’s cultural heritage and cultural knowledge must be valued and affirmed. Culture is the engine of cognition! Learners must feel safe to express themselves as individuals. DI and the UbD model reveal that when I am flexible in my approach and planning – and adjust the curriculum and presentation of information to learners rather than expecting students to modify themselves for my curriculum – I can maximize individual learning opportunities. |
| ***Consequences*** | Offensive, degrading, threatening, culturally insensitive, marginalizing or abusive language will not be tolerated. Negativity, bigotry and bad attitudes will be confronted openly, fully and immediately. If necessary, a violation will be taken to the level of a private hallway meeting and “cooling off” period – then possibly a scheduled meeting. At no time will anti-social words or actions be excused – including all supposed “jokes” or sarcastic remarks. Beyond an open and immediate discussion with the class to restore a sense of safety and equity, a serious violator’s consequences may well result in a call home as the start of a response and intervention plan. I would hope to head off conflicts by not having a big overreaction, but I have seen the disastrous results of “just ignoring little things.” It would be directly counter to my professional and personal responsibilities to ignore a moment when a learner’s feelings are hurt – having been called gay, or referred to as the N-word, or ridiculed as “different” in some other way. My own consequences would be to self-assess my actions and reactions to an incident – and consider whether I could have prevented the problem. |

Differentiated Instruction Notes for an

Urban High School Language Arts Lesson Plan

Vance Holmes

Metropolitan State University

EDU 615

Managing Learning in Urban 5-12 Classrooms
Advanced Theory and Practice

Natalie Rasmussen, Ph.D.

February 16, 2012

Differentiated Instruction Notes for an

Urban High School Language Arts Lesson Plan

E

very learner is different – but for some, the difference occurs to an extent that it qualifies the student as *exceptional* and modification of school practices or special educational services are required. The differentiated instructional planning presented here is related as three urban students with exceptionalities – ***Cordero, Toni*** and ***DeVonne*** – each with a complex set of challenges and experiences which defy simplistic labeling.

**Unit Lesson Plan Overview**

In this two-week unit, a diverse group of thirty, ninth grade urban learners encounter the literary genre of poetry and the basic vocabulary associated with figurative speech. During the unit, students will be demonstrating mastery of learning targets through in-class writings, formal written reports, reading assignments, poetry recitals, and participation in small “Reading Selection Discussion Groups.” One specific lesson plan within the unit focuses on instructing learners in the use of a graphic organizer to create a personal “BioPoem.”

**Exceptional Urban Learner Profiles**

***Cordero***

Cordero is an eager learner and a creative thinker, but he has some learning difficulties which lead to problems completing the written assignments. He has a tough time staying on task during the in-class writing periods, and he seldom does well on his written reports. Cordero has plenty to say! He’s quite a talker! The key is to connect his writing skills to his speaking talents. He is a visual-spatial learner and that can be addressed with the addition of a few visual materials which will likely benefit the entire class – so these will be incorporated into the general sessions.

I will adjust Cordero’s Admit Ticket, Quick-Write and Exit Slip assignments to prompts for drawing and sketching. I can then have him decode the brain-storm of his drawings in a “word splash” of a pre-set minimum number of words. The major written report assignments will be altered so that Cordero is focused on outlining, formatting and organizing material – in simple language and bullet points – without having to worry about stringing together a wordy narrative. Cordero may need a graphic organizer that presents the BioPoem structure differently than shown on the Identity Chart. I will devise an alternate handout that provides space to respond to prompts with symbols and images. Other students may benefit from this format and I will make it available.

***Toni***

Toni is a struggling reader with a visual impairment. She is no longer officially in an EL program, but Spanish is her home language – so linguistic issues may be a factor in Toni’s uneven progress. She is shy about reading aloud or speaking and she often withdraws during group activities. However, when a topic or area of study catches Toni’s interest, she is an unstoppable force! Eyeglasses now correct for her visual impairment, but she simply does not like to read. Much of the barrier to learning involves motivation and self-confidence. Use of a uniquely designed, self-assessment strategy is in order. It will provide Toni a way to chart her own progress.

By adhering to the lesson planning principles of the SIOP model I can optimize the learning experience for Toni and all others in my linguistically diverse classroom. Along with adjustments in personal language behaviors, the SIOP framework includes the following core ideas: practice and discuss learning strategies; model by thinking-aloud; develop vocabulary; clarify content and language objectives; use culturally-rich materials and approaches that relate content to the real lives of learners.

I will invite Toni to explore composing her poems in Spanish as opposed to English – or both if it suits her. I will make sure Toni has access to recorded audio versions of the reading assignments. I will be strategic about Toni’s placement in the Pair - Share and the Reading Selection Discussion Groups, aware of her tendency to withdraw when she feels intimidated. Speaking technically, I will make sure that Toni is seated in a spot that best suits her needs. I will stay in contact with her about self-advocating as it concerns other accommodations that might be helpful.

***DeVonne***

DeVonne has had some behavioral issues in the classroom, often related to the personal and emotional challenges he faces. Along with being extraordinarily gifted and talented, DeVonne has a mild form of ADHD. Technically, DeVonne is Twice Exceptional (2E). This prompts me to make instructional adjustments. First – adjustments to the Quick-Writes and Exit Tickets are in order. It is important to emphasize DeVonne's strengths, not his challenges. He much prefers writing on the computer to composing on pen and paper. I will accommodate this by having DeVonne email his work to me on the day following an in-class writing assignment. He will utilize the in-class writing time to work on the PC with software that will help him organize his thoughts and create notes.

Secondly – I will make some social / environmental adjustments. Although DeVonne has been identified as a learner with ADHD, he is very intense and actually works better with a high level of stimulation. Instead of rotating partners, DeVonne will team with JW during Pair - Shares and group work for this entire unit. Like DeVonne, JW has had some behavioral problems in class, but he is quite gifted in theater, music and sports. He is ready for advanced work, and he gets along well with DeVonne. They seem to bring out the best in each other. When paired on projects in the past, the “bad boys” have actually shown themselves to be class leaders, policing other people’s behavior. I will pair up DeVonne and JW as a team of investigators and devise a differentiated version of the unit learning targets and assessments for them.

In working as a learning team, DeVonne and JW can make choices about how they demonstrate their learning. They may be tasked with deconstructing and analyzing a BioPoem. Instead of individual written reports, the pair could be challenged to create a spoken presentation or a PowerPoint slide show. By thoughtfully aligning assessments with overall standards, I can allow them freedom to design assignments that play to their strengths, while also providing ways for the young men to build positive relationships and a social identity that is supportive of success.

**Lesson Plan**
BioPoem - Identity Chart

Language Arts / Grade 9  **Creator:** Vance Holmes

  **Create Date:** February, 2012

Objective:

* Encounter and Explore Identity Charts

Target:

* I can shape the meaning of a text through use of poetic language.

00 | **Preflection Activity:** Admit Ticket --“How would you describe yourself . . . in 10 words or less?”

05 | **Prior Knowledge Activity:** Collect Admit Tickets. Have learners Pair and Share the written work assigned during the previous session. Collect the assignment.

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| --- |
| 10 | **Vocabulary Development:** Discuss names of poetic devices and other new poetry vocabulary. Have volunteers add words to a Word List poster. |
| 20 | **Skill Lesson - Instruct/Model:** Read a sample BioPoem. Explain that a BioPoem is an 11-line poem that describes a person. Have a few volunteers read sample BioPoems. Introduce the Identity Chart graphic organizer. Model answering the questions on the Identity Chart -- which will provide a structure for the BioPoem. |
| 40 | **Literacy Activity:** Invite learners to get started creating their own Identity Charts. Have students work for about 10 minutes. Answer questions and assist learners as needed. |
| 50 | **Post Literacy Activity**: Have students stop working to Pair and Share the first few items on their charts. Clarify that completed Identity Charts are due by the next class session. Remind learners that it’s important to complete the chart since we will use it to begin writing our BioPoems.  |

55 | **Reflection Activity:** Exit Slip – “What one item best captures your identity? What single thing (a baseball glove, a paint brush, book, etc.) most symbolizes who you are? Explain.”

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| Toward a Culturally Relevant Framework for Building Family-Teacher Relationships in Diverse Urban Schools | VANCE HOLMESParent Interviews |
| **Perceptions, Priorities and Perspectives of Diverse Urban Families as Revealed****through Two Parent Interviews** | EDU: 615Natalie Rasmussen, Ph.D.Metropolitan State University **February 23, 2012** |

Toward a Culturally Relevant Framework for Building

Family-Teacher Relationships in Diverse Urban Schools

**Objectives**

**Focus Question**: *How might classroom management concepts about building family-school relationships translate into a framework that addresses the perceptions, supports the priorities and validates the perspectives of parents/guardians of color?*

This research project is principally intended to increase understanding of how to meet the needs and successfully partner with the families of diverse urban learners. Project design includes a secondary emphasis of inquiry connected to culture. **Ancillary Question**: *Do cultural or ethnic background differences between teacher and family have the effect of highlighting or intensifying particular classroom management issues?*

Research and interview materials were manipulated in order to compare established theories about classroom management – as outlined in *Middle and Secondary Classroom Management* – with the actual experiences of two parents. Themes and patterns in the findings were analyzed and organized into the core concepts and guiding principles of a culturally relevant framework, specific to families of color. This report has been ordered into three main sections: overview of approach and parent research partners; data and analysis; project findings and consequent framework.

**Overview**

In *Middle and Secondary Classroom Management,* Weinstein and Novodvorsky point to four “Benefits of Working Closely with Families,” specified as:

• Knowing about a student’s home situation provides insight into the student’s classroom behavior.

• When families understand what you are trying to achieve, they can provide valuable support and assistance.

• Families can help to develop and implement strategies for changing behavior.

• Parent volunteers can provide assistance in the classroom and school (2011).

Accordingly, interview questions for this project were fashioned to fit into four areas: caring, academic partnering, discipline sharing, and volunteering. A fifth area of questioning was arranged to illicit information about cultural matters. The two parent research partners were each interviewed, in person and telephonically, on two separate occasions. I assured the respondents I would not be using their actual names or the names of their children – thus, partners are identified in this report as Mrs. Miller and Ms. Baker. Both research partners are urban, female, parents of color. Both were quite eager to speak with me on issues of teacher-parent communication and readily shared their public education expectations and experiences.

**Parent Research Partners:**

**Mrs. Miller** is the married mother of high school junior, John. She self-identifies as a proud Mexican American whose family has been in Minnesota for many generations. She and her husband have always tried to be active and involved in their son’s schooling. Mrs. Miller thinks school is very, very important. John has had some educational difficulties over the years. He has changed schools several times. John is now attending an alternative high school in Minneapolis called, “Watershed Academy.” Overall, Mrs. Miller does not have a positive view of her son’s educational experience. General expectations have not been met by teachers, and there have been many frustrations and barriers along the way. While telephone, email, personal meetings and other methods of communicating with teachers were available, these methods were seldom used. When there was communication, it usually occurred through telephone – and at Mrs. Miller’s initiation. Formal parent-teacher conferences are not productive. There are only ten-minute blocks of time available. The conferences are rarely a comfortable or rewarding use of time.

**Ms. Baker** is an African American single mom to her son, Ritchie. Ritchie is a senior at “Academy Charter School,” located in Pittsburgh, PA. He is currently experiencing difficulties with his final graduation project. Ms. Baker holds schooling to be of the utmost importance. She is disappointed by the performance of the schools that have been a part of Ritchie’s educational career. It has been a struggle, an “uphill battle,” that Ms. Baker says she is tired of fighting. Basic methods of communicating with teachers include telephone, email and personal meetings. Parent-teacher conferences are dreaded as times when she will have to just sit and listen to bad news, but she has never missed a single conference.

**Data and Analysis**

**Perceptions**

**Mrs. Miller** feels parents should be involved at school. She has regularly attended conferences, made herself available, and arranged meetings with school staff. Mr. Miller also participated in John’s education, to a somewhat lesser degree. He has attended some parent-teacher conferences and met with teachers at times. Mr. Miller serves on the school’s financial committee as a way to show his son he is involved and interested. Mrs. Miller says the best teacher-parent communication device is the Net. There is a website available to track John’s work. It is a very useful system for the family. The parents get a great deal of helpful and clarifying information about John’s progress from the convenient website.

**Ms. Baker** believes a parent should be actively engaged in his or her child’s education. She has always made a point to stay as in touch as possible with Ritchie’s teachers. She has not found teachers to be particularly receptive to her. She has not been invited and welcomed as a partner at school. Ms. Baker identifies “EdLine,” a website for tracking her son’s schoolwork, to be extremely valuable. However, she is almost overwhelmed with the information. She also has difficulty sorting between what Ritchie says is true – but not yet updated on the site – and what are truly missing assignments that she needs to be concerned with.

**Priorities**

**Mrs. Miller** views responsibility sharing, between school and family, to be a “fifty-fifty proposition.” She says the parent and the teacher are equally accountable. While she acknowledges that teachers have many different students to care for and that her son has presented them with more than his share of challenges – Mrs. Miller does not see that teachers have tried to work as partners. As a parent who is concerned and connected, Mrs. Miller is confident in saying the schools have not made it inviting or easy for her to do a good job as a parent. Specifically, she is not warned about problems in a timely manner. She is convinced that most of her son’s academic and behavioral problems could have been avoided with early notification. Mrs. Miller does not want to be seen as a pest. She expects that a teacher or school staff member is responsible to make her aware of small problems before they grow into big problems. She can cite several instances where her son was actually done a disservice by school workers, including an occasion when John was mistakenly expelled for truancy due to a clerical error. Mrs. Miller’s top suggestion for increasing her involvement would be to have quick meetings or unstructured visits during the day. She would welcome an opportunity to volunteer her time or services if things were scheduled in advance. She feels strongly that most of the parents she knows have a similar outlook about volunteering.

**Ms. Baker** says that generally, teachers have established lines of communication with her. The biggest issue is timeliness. She would like to get a call or an email immediately – “not when it’s too late to do anything.” Having waited too long to tell her of some specific problems, Ritchie is currently having tremendous difficulties. Due to some very specific and odd circumstances, Ritchie has been accused of sexual harassment in an event that involved “digging through a trash can” at school. There are also ongoing problems with Facebook postings. Ms. Baker would like the school to have dealt with some of these things in a timelier manner. In general, Ms. Baker expects teachers to keep her very informed. While appreciating that educators have a difficult job, she feels teachers could do more to keep parents aware of individual behavior matters. She would appreciate opportunities to increase her participation at school. Ms. Baker does not know if other parents are eager to get involved. In her experience, parents are not contacted by teachers unless there is a problem with the student. Ms. Baker assumes most parents would respond positively to an instructor’s invitation to volunteer and connect at school.

**Cultural Perspectives**

**Mrs. Miller** generally feels comfortable interacting with educators and is not intimidated or threatened by the environment of educational institutions. She does not feel that her particular culture is well represented or included in the school environment and curriculum. Mrs. Miller has had some negative experiences with teachers who have prejudged her child. Earlier in John’s school career, she feels that culture and ethnicity may have played a part in some negative experiences, but does not presently see racism, bigotry or cultural bias as a factor affecting her son’s education. She would appreciate a more culturally inclusive school atmosphere.

**Ms. Baker** does not like the way many school teachers have dealt with her son “as a young Black male.” Ms. Baker says Ritchie’s particular social and cultural needs have rarely been addressed, let alone fully met by his instructors. Ms. Baker believes the schools, including Ritchie’s current high school, have not been able to “deal with him” culturally. In her experience, some teachers have “made projections about him as a Black male.” Ms. Baker is not uncomfortable or intimidated by the atmosphere of her son’s schools, however, her cultural background and values have not been explicitly incorporated into the environment or curriculum of schools. Ms. Baker offers that Ritchie’s current school seems to try “more than most have.” A more culturally inclusive atmosphere would be very helpful in increasing her comfort level.

**Findings and Framework**

**Compare/Contrast Family Experiences**

Both parent research partners were specifically asked, “Were there attempts by teachers to understand your home situation in order to gain insight into your child’s classroom behavior?”

Mrs. Miller responded, “Rarely.” She said teachers do not seem genuinely interested in John’s family or personal life. Ms. Baker reports that there have been some attempts from time to time. “I had to reach out,” she says, “but sometimes they reached back.” One teacher came to one of [Ritchie’s] Hip-Hop contests and showed interest in him as a person.” Both respondents are convinced that attempts to reach out and appreciate the home situation would have been extremely helpful. Both repeatedly mention that they realize teachers are over-worked. The respondents are quick to say they understand instructors have many children to care for.

Asked about attempts to involve the parent in reaching academic goals, Mrs. Miller could not recall any such attempts. On the limited occasions when there was contact about schoolwork, Mrs. Miller had to initiate the conversations. Ms. Baker has not been asked or invited to partner in academic endeavors with her son’s instructors. Respondents agree that the class website is a great help for communicating academic progress.

Both Mrs. Miller and Ms. Baker quickly and emphatically responded “no” to the question: “Have you been involved with developing and/or implementing strategies for addressing student social development and emotional - behavioral issues?” Both offer that they have had to take the lead in addressing behavior problems and act as advocates.

Both research respondents would appreciate opportunities for parent education. “I would like more ways to be involved that would help teachers do their job,” said Mrs. Miller. Ms. Baker would like some assistance with parent education. She would also like guidance on ways to improve her interaction with teachers. Both respondents would be willing to act as volunteers. Despite professional obligations, both feel they could schedule time to meet or volunteer during the school day.

As an overall grade – in terms of providing opportunities to actively partner with teachers for student success – Mrs. Miller gives the public schools a grade of “D – poor job.” Ms. Baker awards the schools a “C – average job.”

**Findings**

In *Middle and Secondary Classroom Management,* Weinstein and Novodvorsky tell us, “family involvement can be key” to a young person’s success at school. They also note that “extending specific invitations to participate has been shown to have a powerful impact on family involvement” in schooling (2011). Both Mrs. Miller and Ms. Baker would agree that such invitations would be very welcomed and extremely beneficial. While appreciating that teachers are busy, a system of early warning is seen as a useful way to prevent problems. This report’s findings comport with Weinstein and Novodvorsky’s statements on the importance of recognizing the needs of “families whose cultural backgrounds differ from that of most teachers.” While I cannot – based on such a small sampling – broadly conclude that cultural or ethnic background differences between teacher and family have the effect of highlighting or intensifying particular classroom management issues – both respondents in my research shared the perception that cultural differences had a negative effect, primarily in the area of academic achievement.Both research partners felt that the academic abilities of their children had at times been incorrectly assessed by instructors based on cultural assumptions.I can certainly say that a more culturally conscious, culturally responsive school environment would be welcomed by Mrs. Miller and Ms. Baker, and would likely be advantageous to building relationships with the caretakers of learners from any cultural or social background. Research findings also correspond with all four components of Weinstein and Novodvorsky’s proposed “Benefits of Working Closely with Families” – here identified as caring, academic partnering, discipline sharing, and volunteering. While obviously very limited in scope, reflection on this parent interview project leads me to the beginnings of an extremely important and useful culturally relevant framework for partnering with the families of diverse urban learners.

**Culturally Relevant Framework for
Building Family-Teacher Relationships**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Core Theme** | **Research Marker** | **Core Applications** |
| 1. | **Caring**  | Knowing about a student’s home situation provides insight into the student’s classroom behavior | Be more flexible and understanding about the underlying cause of misbehavior. Enforce rules but make the punishment fit the crime. |
| 2. | **Academics** | When families understand what teachers are trying to achieve, they can provide valuable support and assistance | Share fully in the academic targets and goals. Allow caregivers to take responsibility for raising student achievement. Directly involve parents/guardians in projects. Use a consistently updated website for tracking academic progress. |
| 3. | **Development** -**Discipline** | Families can help to develop and implement strategies for changing behavior | Institute an “early warning system” for discipline issues and provide timely feedback about behavior.Create opportunities for youth of color to form a positive and healthy social identity.  |
| 4. | **Volunteering -Contact** | Parent volunteers can provide assistance in the classroom and school | Extend specific invitations for volunteering at school.Provide specific opportunities for family interaction. Make term conferences a very positive and prompt meeting and provide pathways to conference further. |
| 5. | **Culture** | Managing today’s diverse classrooms requires the knowledge, skills, and predispositions to work with students from diverse racial, ethnic, language, and social class backgrounds | Never prejudge or stereotype a learner’s ability to succeed.Create a culturally inclusive environment where each family’s cultural identity is considered. |

Quality Time Management for the Urban Classroom

– Theory to Practice

Vance Holmes

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 EDU 615

Managing Learning in Urban 5-12 Classrooms
Advanced Theory and Practice

Natalie Rasmussen, Ph.D.

March 1, 2012

Quality Time Management for the Urban Classroom – Theory to Practice

I

n this report’s proposed lesson plan, a diverse group of 25 urban, seventh grade language arts learners examine media literacy concepts. The lesson plan, detailed at the end of this document, was designed to consider ways of going from theory to practice as an urban educator tasked with maximizing opportunities for learning in the multidimensional unpredictability of the classroom. Research on quality time management, as outlined by Weinstein and Novodvorsky in *Middle and Secondary Classroom Management,* broadlyaddresses efficiency factors in three areas of teaching – pre-planning, preparation and practice. This report has been organized to address these theoretical factors through three practical lesson planning questions: What must be established prior to the lesson? How will clear commencement and closure be managed? How will learners efficiently transition between activities?

**Pre-Planning**

* Define boundaries to lessons.
* Maintain good records.

**What must be established prior to this lesson?**

This language arts lesson plan, “Choosing the News,” is simple and straightforward, and correlates to a specific, isolated benchmark from state standards. The lesson’s focus on popular media aims to place academic literacy concepts in an engaging context that is familiar and pertinent to the lives of young urban learners. Although the lesson features several different activities, they all relate to the central learning target. Assignments and formative assessments can be easily accessed through student folders for tracking and monitoring of progress toward targets.

**Preparation**

* Communicate assignments and requirements clearly.
* Establish systems for collecting and checking classwork.
* Monitor student progress.

**How will clear commencement and closure to class be managed?**

Assignments in this lesson plan are to be carefully explained. Rubrics for the independent study project and the in-class activity are provided and explored. Assignments are tied to standards-based learning targets and back-mapped assessments. At the top of the class, the day’s learning target is posted, discussed, and clarified. Important information points and instructions are clearly stated and repeated in various formats. Sessions routinely then move to a brief “Pre-flection” activity. Daily targets and assessments are recorded in the student folders. By circulating the room during independent and group work periods, individual progress can be assessed. At the end of the session, learners are asked to come together as a group for a final reflection activity. This lesson’s commencement and closing rituals are repeated in class daily, almost without exception. Learners understand where they are expected to be situated and what they are expected to be doing at the start and end of each period. The distribution and collection of student folders and other materials is handled systematically. Peer assessment of independent study assignments and self-assessment of work (maintained in student folders) are included to help hold students accountable while making the best use of class time.

**Practice**

* Prepare students for transitions.
* Establish habits, rules and routines.

**How will learners transition between activities?**

“Choose the News” employs two shared-learning strategies: Pair-Share and unit study groups. Students use the Pair-Share system several times a week and are familiar with the various ways learners can be paired. For this lesson, students are simply asked to turn to the person next to them. The study groups, here referred to as “Media Teams,” have been established prior to this lesson. Each team has previously assembled and claimed a particular work area in the room. Since these teams will be the same throughout the entire two-week unit, students will be able to quickly group and begin working. Warning of an imminent transition to a new portion of the lesson is given in advance. All transitions are actively supervised. Learners are explicitly made aware of the value and purpose of efficacious transition activity and their cooperation is openly acknowledged.

**To be an efficient urban classroom manager**, I must be prepared to model good organizational skills. I can increase productivity and limit stress by creating and maintaining well-crafted rituals, routines and rules. Through use of clear targets, shared rubrics and high-interest formative assessment activities, I can “set my students up” for success! Knowing that each learner – given a worthy target that holds still long enough for them to see – will succeed in his or her own way, I must also be ready with a system of feedback that communicates individual progress and directs students toward pathways to further achievement. Using research-based time management techniques in three instructional areas – pre-planning, preparation and practice – I can increase the quantity of my students’ time on task and raise the quality of their educational experience.

**Lesson Plan**
Choosing the News

Language Arts / Grade 7  **Creator:** Vance Holmes

Media Literacy  **Create Date:** March, 2012



Objectives:

* identify the constructed nature of news media
* experience the role of news editor

Target:

* I can critically analyze information found in electronic, print, and mass media.

Core Standard:

* [9. 9. 7.] synthesize information and recognize categories, trends, and themes across multiple sources

00 | **Preflection:** Welcome learners to class as they enter. Have them retrieve their personal folders and add the day’s assignment to it before taking a seat in the opening circle.

Warmly greet everyone. Tell students the news “headline” of your day. (“Teacher Misses Lunch” – “Tie Ruined by Ink Stain”) Have a few student volunteers share some examples. Ask learners to take a moment to jot down their own headline in the folder notebook. They are to choose a highlight event, give it a newsy spin, and write a very brief headline of their day. After a few moments, bring the activity to a halt. Have learners file the work in their folder.

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|  10 | **Prior Knowledge Activity:** Review the session’s posted schedule and learning target. Discuss and check for understanding of target. Ask learners about their experience completing the Media Usage Self-analysis charts. Review the assignment’s rubric. Invite learners to pair and share their work with a neighbor. Bring the activity to a halt. Have students place the assignment in folders.  |
|  20 | **Lesson - Instruction Activity:** Tell students they will be working in their media unit study groups. Check that each learner knows which of the 5 groups is his or her “Media Team.” Announce that teams will have about 10 minutes to create a TV news broadcast by evaluating, choosing, and arranging a set of news stories. Ask learners to peruse the “Rules of the News Game” handout (in folder). Discuss and clarify the rubric.  |
|  25 | **Literacy Activity:** Direct students to transition into groups, rearranging chairs into clusters or sitting on the floor. Tell Media Teams to begin working on lists. Distribute a sheet of chart paper and marker to each group. Circulate the room. Monitor progress. Assess for understanding. After 7 minutes, warn teams to begin wrapping up. At 9 minutes, ask students to bring their work to a close and hang their team poster on the wall. Remind teams they will have time to finalize their list before sharing it during the next session. Check that all posters are affixed to the wall and retrieve markers. Bring the activity to a halt. |

40 | **Reflection Activity:** Ask learners to rearrange chairs, bring their folders, and assemble for the final circle.

Bring students’ attention to their folders. Have several volunteers read the “headline” of their day. Reflect on the headlines. At finish, have helpers collect and secure folders. Remind learners to keep working on their Media Usage Self-analysis charts. Thank everyone for moving purposefully and smoothly through the different portions of the lesson! Tell students that you’re proud of how they’re learning to transition between activities. Dismiss the class.

Learning DiversityA Multiple Intelligences and Learning Styles Report

Vance Holmes

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EDU 615

Managing Learning in Urban 5-12 Classrooms
Advanced Theory and Practice

Natalie Rasmussen, Ph.D.

March 15, 2012

**Learning Diversity**

A Multiple Intelligences and Learning Styles Report

I. Self-Assessment

M

easuring the validity, strength and usefulness of Howard Gardner’s *Multiple Intelligences* (MI) Theory has been a matter of heavy debate by educators and education psychologists over the last ten years. For many reasons, MI theory has become the subject of great controversy. With this debate in mind, I offer an evaluation of myself as having strengths in the following two areas of Gardner’s eight intelligences: Linguistic Intelligence and Musical Intelligence. I love to read, write and invent new words. I also enjoy reading and composing music. I play several musical instruments by ear and pride myself on having a solid sense of pitch, tempo, rhythm and harmonics.

For further proof of my MI type, I point to the *Literacyworks* website (Literacyworks). The organization’s page links to an extensive, 56-question “Multiple Intelligence Assessment.” According to the online evaluation, I score highest in the musical, linguistic and intrapersonal categories. My lowest score is in the area of logic/math. These results comport with my own evaluation. Of course, it is not clear that our brains handle musical processing and problem solving differently than math processing. In fact, there is much research to suggest that the two are cognitively related (Chandler).

While no one argues that different children will learn in different ways, Gardner’s model presents a ‘nature/nurture’ conundrum. It is certainly true that in my formative years I was surrounded by music lovers and was exposed to an exciting variety of musical experiences. I was not brought up in an environment where numeracy was particularly valued – nor did I have contact with people who had a passion for math. I suspect I would now be more disposed toward math had I been more exposed to it early on.

With no scientific basis for the compartmentalization in his theory, Gardner’s discrete categories are open to question. While never fully embraced by Gardner, many have noted the absence of what would constitute a ninth intelligence – in the realm of the religious and spiritual – sometimes referred to as an ‘existential intelligence.’

It seems to me that Gardner’s MI theory may be best used as an inverse diagnostic tool. That is to say, a student who evidences a natural affinity and high ability in specific areas of study may be best served by educational experiences and nurturing in opposite areas so that his or her ‘natural skills’ may be transferred. It also occurs to me that what Gardner characterized as ‘intelligences’ may actually be cognitive styles tied to culture and cultural knowledge. Gardner himself finally defined intelligence quite broadly as “the ability to respond successfully to new situations and the capacity to learn from one’s past experiences” (Literacyworks). In this sense, we can perhaps consider, not individual categories of multiple intelligences, but multiple domains of literacies – often described as academic literacy, cultural literacy, civic literacy, sports literacy and the like – all of which require the same basic skill set regardless of individual learning style preferences.

II. Motivating Diverse Urban Learners

In the following proposed two-week communication arts unit, a diverse group of seventh grade urban learners contemplate the core concepts of media literacy. The particular lessons detailed here involve both studying and creating persuasive advertising. My intervention strategies for “Increasing Expectations of Success” are (1) divide lengthy projects into shorter, more ‘do-able’ parts, and (2) provide informative feedback. The three chosen strategies for “Increasing Perceived Value of Task” are (1) relate lessons to students’ own lives, (2) allow students to create finished products, and (3) provide opportunities for students to interact with peers. The unit’s MI assessment choices include the linguistic, intrapersonal and spatial intelligences (or learning style preferences).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Basic Lesson Plan** | **Modified Lesson Plan** | **Strategies** |
| **Poster and Essay** **Activities** (5 sessions) |
| Learners make a poster or drawing of a new product – then write an essay describing the product’s purpose, features and potential buyers. Graded papers are returned. Learners show posters and read essays aloud to the class. | Learners will brainstorm in pairs using a characteristics worksheet. They will create a “splash page” web design based on three chosen personal traits – then write and publish a blog essay describing the design choices. Pair and Share work. | \* relate lessons to students’ own lives\*allow students to create finished products\* provide opportunities for students to interact with peers |
|  | Learners watch and help the instructor create a “splash page” – then they are invited to work on their own independently. In lessons involving movie preview clips (intro paragraph) and clips of a post-game sports show (conclusion paragraph), learners work in pairs and are guided through the creation of each part of an essay. After rough draft paragraphs are finished, learners are given feedback before finally publishing a complete blog entry. | \*divide lengthy projects into shorter, more “do-able” parts\* provide informative feedback |
| **Unit Learning Assessment** (5 sessions) |
| After class lectures and assigned readings – learners take a traditional, multiple choice and short-answer test on media literacy concepts. | Linguistic: Work in a small literature circle to read and discuss chosen topics. Write individual final reports.Intrapersonal: Using selected readings, keep a personal media usage survey and unit journal. Create a report on findings, or opt for a traditional test.Spatial: Work in pairs or trios with readings and graphic organizers – then use PowerPoint to present a group report on self-selected media subjects. |  |

Independent Work Project:

Ask Doctor Love

Vance Holmes

Metropolitan State University

EDU 615

Managing Learning in Urban 5-12 Classrooms
Advanced Theory and Practice

Natalie Rasmussen, Ph.D.

March 29, 2012

**Independent Work Project**: *Ask Doctor Love*

Recognizing the Subordinate Clause

A clause is a group of related words that contains a subject and a verb. There are two types of clauses:

* Independent or Main Clause: A group of related words containing a subject and verb - and makes sense all by itself.
* Dependent or Subordinate Clause: A group of related words containing a subject and verb - but it does not make sense by itself. A dependent or subordinate clause needs the independent clause to make sense.

Example: When John came into the room, the children clapped.

Independent Clause: the children clapped

Dependent Clause: When John came into the room



*This project has two parts. Together they are worth a total of 60 points. Carefully read all directions before responding.*

**Part One Directions:** (36 points / 3 points per item) Write down the independent clause in each of the following sentences.

1. Usually writing for a magazine or newspaper, an advice columnist is someone who gives advice to people.

2. Although it isn't always the case, an advice columnist usually answers readers' questions on personal and romance problems.

3. While a single name may be attached to the column, oftentimes the columnist is in fact a team of writers.

4. Featured in *The Athenian Mercury*, the first known advice column appeared in 1690.

5. Appearing in several newspapers across the nation, many advice columns are syndicated.

6. *Dear Abby, Ask Ann Landers* and Carolyn Hax's *Tell Me About It* are prominent examples of columns that dispense advice.

7. Although founded in 1956 by Pauline Phillips, the *Dear Abby* column is presently written by Jeanne Phillips, Pauline's daughter.

8. Although in a more modern form, advice columns on the internet provide ways to share one's interests and expertise.

9. Since everyone has an opinion, everyone with internet access can create their own advice column.

10. *Elder Wisdom Circle, Help Me Harlan* and *Ask Beth* are Internet sites that offer relationship advice to teens and young adults.

11. In advice columns, questions are most often asked anonymously with the signature indicating the problem that is being expressed.

12. For example, someone who is asking about puzzling behavior in their partner may sign their letter "Confused in Cottage Grove.”

**Part Two Directions:** (24 points) You are a local newspaper advice columnist known as “The Love Doctor.” Read the following letter, reflect, and – using a separate sheet of paper – offer your advice in a written response. Your response must be at least 6 sentences long and it must contain at least two compound sentences.

Dear Doctor Love:

My boyfriend and I recently broke up and I don't know what to do. We're both juniors in high school. Most of our conversations took place online, even though we go to the same school. To be honest, he only felt comfortable talking to me online. He broke up with me, but said he wanted to stay friends because he didn't want to lose me in his life. Now he refuses to acknowledge I exist. I try to have friendly conversations with him every once in a while, but he always sounds bored when we chat online and answers me with short texts. Sometimes when we cross paths in the hall, he pretends like he doesn't even see me. Do you think I should hold on and still try to be friends with him or let him go?

Signed,

Silent Treatment in St. Paul

**Answer Page**

**Part One Responses**

1. an advice columnist is someone who gives advice to people

2. an advice columnist usually answers readers' questions on personal and romance problems.

3. oftentimes the columnist is in fact a team of writers.

4. the first known advice column appeared in 1690.

5. many advice columns are syndicated.

6. *Dear Abby, Ask Ann Landers* and Carolyn Hax's *Tell Me About It* are prominent examples of columns

7. the *Dear Abby* column is presently written by Jeanne Phillips, Pauline's daughter

8. advice columns on the internet provide ways to share one's interests and expertise

9. everyone with internet access can create their own advice column

10. *Elder Wisdom Circle, Help Me Harlan* and *Ask Beth* are Internet sites

11. questions are most often asked anonymously

12. someone who is asking about puzzling behavior in their partner may sign their letter "Confused in Minneapolis"

**Part Two Sample Response:**

Dear Silent Treatment:

For someone so quiet, he's sure giving you a headache. I'm more worried about you than him. I'm worried because you're spending this much time on him. Considering he could only communicate with you via e-mail and text, I think this boy has some kind of social anxiety. He's quiet because he doesn't know how to express himself. He never could. Instead of waiting around for him to acknowledge you, think about why you are so focused on him. Maybe focusing on him means that you don't have to have a real relationship. Any girl with a little self-confidence would move on and appreciate that this guy has bigger issues to deal with. Instead of waiting for him to talk, I'd talk to a therapist or counselor at school who can help you figure out why you're so stuck on him.

Sincerely,

Doctor Love

**Rationale**

This independent work project is designed for grade 9 language arts learners. Students are to work alone -- however, for purposes of differentiated instruction it may be advantageous for some students to work in pairs. Although given 30 minutes to finish the handout, it should take learners 40-50 minutes to fully complete. Learners will be instructed to finish the handout as independent work outside of class. At the following session, students will be invited to share and compare their responses.

Successful completion of this handout requires multiple skills. The skill sets employed include reading, writing to specific task, inferring, critically analyzing, reflecting, and recognizing standard grammar conventions. The objectives of this independent work project align with the following *Minnesota Academic Standards for English Language Arts*:

* **9.4.1.** – Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
* **9.7.2.** – Write informative / explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
* **9.7.4**. – Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
* **9.7.9.** – Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
* **9.9.7.** – Critically analyze information found in electronic, print, and mass media
* **9.11.1.** – Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Variations on a Team:

Cooperative Options for the Urban Literacy Classroom

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EDU 615

Managing Learning in Urban 5-12 Classrooms
Advanced Theory and Practice

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April 5, 2012

**Variations on a Team:** Cooperative Options for the Urban Literacy Classroom

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rban literacy teachers not only seek to establish and sustain a caring, orderly environment in which students can engage in meaningful learning – effective educators also aim to enhance students’ social and emotional growth. These goals are of equal importance. The need for orderliness does not outweigh the need for meaningful instruction (Weinstein & Novodvorsky). Literacy educators must be able to plan and manage multidimensional cooperative learning strategies for the multicultural urban classroom. Cooperative group-work offers unique social and academic rewards – enhancing motivation, increasing involvement, improving relationships and advancing achievement.

|  |
| --- |
| **Basic Language Arts Lesson Plan** |
| *Independent Student Learning* |
| During Week One – of a theoretical month-long language arts unit – eleventh grade, urban learners study the first act of Lorraine Hansberry’s drama, *A Raisin in the Sun*. Learners daily listen to lectures and read the text of the play. Along with in-class observation, formative assessment is measured through written response to questions and prompts appearing on study guide handouts completed by learners outside of class. At the end of the week, learners are graded on a multiple-choice and short-answer exam demonstrating knowledge and understanding of material covered. |

While this traditional, basic instructional model has its affordances, they are outweighed by constraints from a lack of any of the cooperative learning opportunities standard to effective teaching practices.

* Affordances
	+ Whole-group instruction is systematic, orderly and quiet.
	+ In-class reading time and unison assessments are easy to administer.
* Constraints
	+ The single, multiple choice test is simple to grade, but the instructor has no way to check for full engagement and comprehension until after the week’s lessons are over.
	+ Learners are given few opportunities to invest in the literature as a group, benefit from the diverse perspectives and cultural understandings of classmates, or share insights.

Most importantly, the traditional teacher-centric lesson plan does not presume students to be responsive learners – responsible for their own individualized learning. The top-down structure does not position students as uniquely skilled users of language and literacy who enter the classroom possessing a great deal of cultural-linguistic knowledge. It does not model, but rather mocks the cooperative, constructive, connective environment necessary to higher-order thinking and creative scholarship.

**Cooperative Learning Options**

The following cooperative learning strategies variously address and correct for the constraints of the traditional teacher-ordered classroom. Of course, the loss of centralized command is no small matter for the urban literacy educator.

While it is clear that cooperative, small-group work maximizes individual learning opportunities, the process won’t necessarily look (or sound) very efficient to the uninitiated outsider. “Three-ring circus” is probably the metaphor most often associated with the multi-tasking mayhem of the cooperative model. And for good reason! There is no way to be sure that, in the simultaneous work sessions, some students aren’t just slacking off with friends. Not all partners prove to be immediately compatible. Despite dreams of dutiful pupils staying perfectly on task during group activities, the reality is – things are bound to occasionally get off-track, get a little loud, or go a little crazy. Still, through relevant and engaging lessons, and quality rubrics providing clarity of assessment, the controlled chaos of the cooperative classroom can be enormously beneficial.

**Variations**

|  |
| --- |
| **Helping Permitted** |
| *Literature Circles* |
| For this study of the first act of *A Raisin in the Sun,* learners listen to a few brief lectures and are then given the option of working alone or in small ‘Literature Circles’ to complete the week’s in-class reading and worksheets and the out-of-class assignments. While learners choosing to work alone read silently to themselves, learners in the Literature Circles sit together and take turns reading aloud. Lit Circle learners are free to share information prior to submission of assignments in their small, instructor-selected groups of three or four – but each student is responsible for turning in his or her own work by the end of the session. A multiple choice and short answer exam is given at the end of the week. |
| **Helping Obligatory** |
| “Think, Pair, Share” |
| At each class session throughout a week of studying Act One of Hansberry’s play, learners will be teamed with a new partner for a daily “Think, Pair, Share” exercise. Some exercises will pertain to the play, others will explicitly address effective partnering skills. Having initially chosen a particular playing card – or a number from one to 30 – students at each session will be randomly paired through the drawing of a matching card or number. (Alternately, learners could be divided into groups of three.) Based on out-of-class readings and assignments, teams will be given class time to work through a set of questions or discussion points – and then present their findings to another team. At the end of the week, students write a short reflection on effective learner partnering skills and take a brief quiz covering Act One of *A Raisin in the Sun*. |
| **Peer Tutoring** |
| *Strategic Instruction* |
| Throughout the week of study, learners are assigned to do independent readings of *A Raisin in the Sun’s* first act. Learners are initially given whole-class instruction on the proper completion of four, generic, language arts graphic organizers. Students are placed in carefully selected pairings – combining two learners of complementary strengths. Partners then work together during sessions to complete a daily Plot Synopsis, Event Timeline, Literary Elements Map and Character Analysis handout. At week’s end, students separately complete a short evaluation form describing and assessing the experience. Learners independently take a brief quiz on the literature studied |
| **Cooperative Group** |
| *Socratic Seminar* |
| After an initial written self-evaluation and group goal-setting activity, learners are led through a week-long series of Socratic Seminars. During these seminars, students contemplate and conference on their out-of-class readings of *A Raisin in the Sun’s* opening act. In preparation for each seminar, students create pre-discussion “Playsheets” and “Talking Point Memos.” Assessment for the week is based on proper participation in the Socratic Seminars and on preparation of written materials. Students are finally asked to complete a personal evaluation form and a group goal assessment form, and take an out-of-class essay exam related to Act One of the play. |
| **Completely Cooperative Group** |
| *“Jigsaw” Project* |
| In 4-person Reading Selection Discussion (RSD) groups that are gender-mixed and culturally heterogeneous, learners will be assigned roles and work in a “Jigsaw” structure to complete a group project. As they complete Act One readings of *A Raisin in the Sun* outside of class, RSD group members are assigned to fill out a Plot Synopsis, an Event Timeline, a Literary Elements Map or a Character Analysis handout. Handout assignments will rotate so that each group member is responsible for completing one of each type of worksheet during the week. In class, group members share and compare ideas, jigsaw information, and help one another finish all handouts. Using a project rubric, RSD groups construct a creative class presentation that overviews their findings on Act One. At week’s end, RSD groups will turn in one of each four handout types – although the instructor will (randomly) determine which team member’s copy of which particular handout is to be submitted for grading. Learners are finally given an out-of-class essay exam relating to the first act of Lorraine Hansberry’s drama. |

**Learning to Cooperate**

Although these highly effective but complex cooperative learning plans are not always simple to supervise, the need for orderliness does not outweigh the need for meaningful instruction. Naturally, students can’t be expected to expertly maneuver around the pitfalls in a process they are still discovering. Self-monitoring and self-assessment skills are key components to cooperative learning. While things may get a little loud or loose at times, students won’t learn these skills unless they are explicitly taught and used in the classroom.

Fostering positive teacher-student and student-student relationships is not a side activity for the urban language arts educator – to be done after all the ‘real’ schoolwork is finished. Community-building must be incorporated into the curriculum. The personal, social-emotional development of learners is of no less importance than their academic progress. While it is not of *greater* importance than academics, building respectful relationships of trust with diverse students comes first. It allows for the kind of cooperative learning that maximizes individual academic achievement in the urban literacy classroom.

The Six Thinking Caps

Recitation / Group Discussion Management Exercise

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EDU 615

Managing Learning in Urban 5-12 Classrooms
Advanced Theory and Practice

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**The Six Thinking Caps Activity**

**Communication Style**:

Discussion will be conducted through a loose, call out loud/raise hands combination style. While participants can freely speak, they may be asked to identify their position on the topic through a show of hands.

**Participation**:

Beyond the “trying on a new hat” effect of the exercise itself, the plan to encourage full engagement and participation in the discussion includes requesting a written response to the prompt.

**Discussion Development**:

The strategy employed to move the discussion deeper than simply a surface conversation of facts and opinions is to have participants consider a larger question relating to the “Six Thinking Caps” approach and its potential value to urban educators in diverse classrooms.

Topic Question

Take a moment to jot down a few of your immediate thoughts in reaction to this prompt according to the particular thinking cap you’re currently wearing:

*In an effort to improve public school teaching, Minnesota schools are going to closely tie teachers’ salaries to the scores their students receive on state standardized tests.*

Guiding Questions

**(1.)** What about assessment of creative arts learning, social growth and advancement in other areas not evaluated by state tests?

**(2.**) Shouldn’t we account for student scores adversely affected by social factors (broken homes, poverty, family dysfunction) which teachers have no control over?

**(3.)** Linking test scores to teacher pay will encourage what sorts of behavior and attitudes in schools?

**(4.)** Why shouldn’t great teachers, like great doctors and great lawyers, be highly compensated and richly rewarded for professional success?

Real-Life Connection/Application

Is the “Six Thinking Caps” system likely to be an effective discussion strategy in the diverse urban classroom? Why or Why not?

**The Six Thinking Caps**

Originated by Edward De Bono

* A technique for effective meeting and/or problem solving
* A system for learning how to switch your view, vision or attitude
* A tool for individual and team learning development



|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Green Cap**[Creative] | **Black Cap**[Facts] |
| Unlimited possibilities & Looks from multiple angles.What if? Then, else. New composition of old elements. | Facts & Figures. Historical Data. |
|  |  |
| **Blue Cap**[Control] | **Yellow Cap**[Positive Thinking] |
| Management & Workability(Organize, Lead, Support & Control)How it could / should be done. | No Fear & UnlimitedMission Possible! 100% on time & on target. No risk at all. |
|  |  |
| **White Cap**[Negative Logic] | **Red Cap**[Emotion] |
| Fear & Limited by DrawbacksIt’s impossible. Too good to be true. | Emotions & AttitudesI love. I hate. I feel . . . |

Conquering Classroom Fears:
Reflection, Proactivity, Power

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EDU 615

Managing Learning in Urban 5-12 Classrooms
Advanced Theory and Practice

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**Conquering Classroom Fears:**

Reflection, Proactivity, Power

*"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.*

*Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.*

*It is our light that most frightens us.”*

– from *A Return To Love,* by Marianne Williamson

**Fear Factor –** What do I most fear encountering in the management of my own classroom?

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hile I am somewhat afraid of being confronted with difficult behavioral or disciplinary problems in the unpredictable *simultaneity* of my *multidimensional,* multicultural classroom – fear of such problems is not a central concern. And, though I sometimes worry that I don’t fully understand all of the technical, occupational requirements of being a public school teacher, I am not terrified about this. What really scares me is the prospect that I will fail to engage my students. In my worst teaching nightmare, the materials and activities – which I just knew would be exciting and engrossing – fall flat before a bunch of bored teenagers. There I stand . . . exposed as the eager egghead newbie fraud, facing down dozens of yawning students falling asleep at their desks. *That’s truly frightening!*

Of course, the key to conquering my classroom fears – and empowering myself – is to be personally reflective and professionally proactive.

**Reflection –** Why is this particular situation so frightening to me?

For one thing, I feel it is my responsibility as an educator to offer well-deigned, well-prepared lesson plans that are inviting, relevant, challenging and rewarding. I fear falling short of my professional pedagogical duties.

Secondly, throughout my career as a student – including my public schooling, my undergraduate education and my many years as a graduate student – I have been subjected to a frightening assortment of dull and uninspiring lesson plans. I am horrified at the prospect of becoming a teacher who hands out the tiresome sort of busywork I have, as a student, found so objectionable.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly – presentation of flat, uninteresting lessons is my chief complaint about the high school teachers I have observed in my preservice work. Generally speaking, teachers’ lesson plans seem workaday and unimaginative. I am always depressed when I sit to observe a classroom and find that yet another instructor has decided to lecture for much of the period. So, I fear being a dull teacher because I dread that quality most in other educators!

**Proactivity –** What is my action plan for preparing and dealing with this fear?

The theory of educational psychology most central to my strategy to engage learners is the *Expectancy-Value Theory of Motivation*. This Eccles and Wigfield model holds that motivation is a function of two characteristics. The first one is confidence (expectancy). Confident in their ability to perform a task, learners are more likely to be motivated to do it. The second characteristic is relevance (value). When a learner feels that an activity is relevant, he or she will be more inclined to participate. So, to motivate urban learners, the questions I must always ask are these:

* What is it that urban learners already do well, and have a high degree of confidence in, that I can draw from?
* How can I situate the content in something that is relevant to learners in a real way?

Along with being culturally responsive, I intend to ward off the haunting spectre of student boredom through strict use of standards-based lesson planning that is consistently tied to the core knowledge and skills of literacy education. I will explicitly relate content to state standards and to the real lives of learners through a core standards translation system I have devised called ***SOUL Focus*** – *Success Opportunity for Urban Learners!* Each SOUL Focus is a plainly-worded standard that specifically identifies the “college and career readiness” (CCR) anchor area for diverse, inner-city students. This urban learning protocol – based directly on the Common Core website’s CCR definitions – is an instructional planning assessment tool, as well as a guide to answering the learners’ chief evaluative question: “Why are we doing this?” The point of my protocol is to energize the passive, academic CCR language so that urban students are explicitly instructed as to which of the broad, basic life and learning skills are being addressed.

**Power Over Fear**

Considering the important role of the urban educator and the power of inner-city school instructors to have a potentially positive, lifelong influence on young people, there is much for me to fear as a preservice teacher. But, as I nervously enter into my own classroom, anxious to be a caring, respectful and authoritative manager, I carry with me the instructive and empowering words of our great *teacher*, Nelson Mandela:

*“The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”*

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Authoritative Management of the

Culturally Diverse Urban Classroom:

A Research to Practice Report

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Managing Learning in Urban 5-12 Classrooms
Advanced Theory and Practice

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April 26, 2012

**Authoritative Management of the Culturally Diverse Urban Classroom**:

A Research to Practice Report

“

Now more than ever,” say researchers Carol Simon Weinstein and Ingrid Novodvorsky, “teachers need to know how to establish classrooms that are supportive, inclusive, caring, and orderly” (2011). Schools, they write, “are more heterogeneous than ever, with students from a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.” In *Middle and Secondary Classroom Management*, Weinstein and Novodvorsky speak of ‘authoritative management’ – knowing how to combine warm, caring, respectful relationships with the demand that students work hard, comply with classroom norms, and treat one another with consideration – and outline five guiding principles discovered in their research of effective, authoritative classroom managers:

* Successful classroom management promotes self- regulation.
* Most problems of disorder can be avoided if teachers foster positive teacher - student relationships, implement engaging instruction, and use good preventive management strategies.
* The need for order must not supersede the need for meaningful instruction.
* Teachers must be “culturally responsive classroom managers.”
* Becoming an effective classroom manager requires reflection, hard work, and time.

This research to practice paper is an investigation guided by the five principles of best practices for the management of the urban classroom as they relate to current research articles on two important topics – improving teacher quality and closing the student *Achievement Gap*. The composition has been ordered into three parts: Culturally Responsive Management, Preventive Management, and Reflective Teaching Practices.

While all five of Weinstein and Novodvorsky’s authoritative management principles are of equal importance, this report will focus on my own personal and professional intention to daily model the practices standard to the trans-culturally competent– *culturally responsive* – management of the culturally and linguistically diverse urban classroom.

I. Culturally Responsive Management

***Their View – My View***

**Summary and Key Ideas:** With an often exhausting honesty, John Melvin shares part of his journey on the road to becoming a culturally responsive teacher in his article, *Their View – My View: A White Teacher’s Quest to Understand his African-American Middle School Students’ Perceptions of Racism* (2004). In the face of daily disruptions and discipline problems from his diverse students, Melvin organizes a research project and invites his learners to express their views on diversity and equity in his classroom. Two student sessions of decidedly limited participation are documented and dissected.

Throughout the extended process, Melvin seems reluctant to accept the data his own research project is producing. In his final analysis however, Melvin is forced to conclude: “I realize I may exhibit covert and subtle racist behavior that interferes in creating a positive relationship with the students.”

**Reflection and Analysis:** I am taken aback by some of the suspect data and mushy methodology in this study. And, on the very most basic level of shared information about culturally responsive teaching, the article is misleading. More than a few times, Melvin misquotes educator and author Gloria Ladson-Billings and misstates concepts in her work with the culturally responsive classroom model. Melvin oddly admits to having made up things which appear nowhere in her work. The culturally responsive education framework is based on the idea that culture is central to student learning. Gloria Ladson-Billings has been exceedingly clear about the reflective practice required of a culturally responsive classroom manager (1995).

John Melvin admits he was not, in fact, being consistent with his room rules, threats and punishments. He opened himself up to perceptions and allegations of bias. If Melvin had simply moved on with his lessons, instead of spending all of the learners’ class time writing names on the board and ordering up detention slips – he would have eliminated half of his problems.

**Implications for Practice**: *Their View – My View* is an edifying, real-life dramatization of the third Authoritative Management principle enumerated by Weinstein and Novodvorsky:

* The need for order must not supersede the need for meaningful instruction.

Weinstein and Novodvorsky advise that teachers should always follow two guidelines when addressing any misbehavior. First, teachers should preserve the dignity of the learner. To discipline learners in a way that embarrasses them will likely escalate rather than end the misbehavior. Second – keep the lesson going with as little disruption as possible. One of the key goals of the classroom manager is maximizing learning time – that means minimizing distractions.

***Closing the Achievement Gap***

**Summary and Key Ideas**: “Historically, we have tried to raise the achievement level of low-achieving minority and immigrant students living in urban low-income areas,” writes Erwin Flaxman in his paper, *Closing the Achievement Gap: Two Views from Current Research* (2003). Flaxman goes on to point out that the gap is just as wide, or worse, in schools in suburban middle-income communities. His report compares and comments on the findings of two studies: the Ferguson Study of the Minority Student Achievement Network and the Ogbu Ethnographic Study.

Ronald Ferguson of the Kennedy School at Harvard University collated raw data from the Minority Student Achievement Network in an effort to determine how the diverse, suburban schools studied could be “educationally productive in closing the achievement gap in their heterogeneous student bodies.” Ferguson offers details about students and directives for schools.

Working through the University of California at Berkeley, anthropologist John Ogbu oversaw a large-scale study designed to determine “how the identity of African-American students as an oppressed group outside the opportunity structure affects their academic achievement specifically and their school experience more generally.” Professor Ogbu supplies information about the views and attitudes of African-Americans toward the classroom. He concludes that schools and communities must “provide academically successful role models,” celebrate success, and integrate "multicultural perspectives into the academic curriculum.”

**Reflection and Analysis**: The confounding, central and overriding concern of urban education has long been identified as the *Achievement Gap*. The unfortunate phrase refers to the disparities in test scores between Black and White, Latina/Latino and White, and recent immigrant and White students. There are two related concepts – the teacher *Diversity Gap* and the *Opportunity Gap*.

Academic achievement is a difficult thing to measure and it is not at all clear that state proficiency exams and standardized tests are true indicators of cognitive ability and aptitude. Still, students of color – particularly students who identify as Black or African American – tend to score significantly lower on such standardized assessments, often across regional, social and economic strata.

There are any number of contributing socio - psycho educational factors hidden in the shadows of America’s student – teacher Diversity Gap. We have a monocultural teacher workforce that is near 90% White – yet, in many of our large urban districts, so-called minority students make up 60 – 75% of the student body. This disparity may be at the root of the *disproportionality* in our schools – that is, the disproportionate numbers of Black students who are suspended, labeled with a learning or behavioral disorder, and tracked away from gifted /talented learner programs.

We do not know that a shared ethnic or social identity between student and teacher will improve learning outcomes. We have no research indicating that a teacher’s effectiveness will vary from learner to learner depending on the student’s social or cultural identification. What we do know however, is that culture is the engine of cognition. Education is a deeply cultural, deeply human, deeply personal endeavor. What we learn – is tied to how we learn, and who we learn with. The broad principles of the Multicultural Education model would imply that an effective teacher, regardless of his or her cultural perspective, must be a culturally competent professional, dedicated to diversity and equity in the classroom.

Minnesota’s Black-White Achievement Gap is one of the worst in the nation. It is a looming disaster for the Twin Cities area. Despite occasional break-throughs and isolated successes in closing the gap over the last thirty years, things have not gotten measurably better. What certainly has not improved is the dropout rate for Black and Latino students. One in three students of color fails to graduate with a diploma. The educational Achievement Gap can affect people long after their teens – as it points to the social Opportunity Gap. Students who drop out are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as their graduating classmates.

**Implications for Practice**: Several of Flaxman’s findings in *Closing the Achievement Gap* directly relate to the fourth, Weinstein and Novodvorsky Authoritative Management principle:

* Teachers must be “culturally responsive classroom managers.”

Ogbu emphasizes the power of role models, public recognition of achievement, and culturally responsive teaching. Ferguson’s work indicates three more items: (1) students value and respond to encouragement; (2) teachers “should assume that there are no systematic group-level differences in effort or motivation to succeed” among cultural or ethnic groups; and (3) schools must recognize and respond to the “skill and knowledge deficit problems of particular cultural groups.”

As to particular groups of people and their “deficit problems” – Gloria Ladson-Billings sees things somewhat differently than Ferguson. She argues that our focus on the Achievement Gap is misplaced. Ladson-Billings maintains, we need to look instead at the *Education Debt*. This debt is composed of a mix of historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral components. There is a considerable and growing amount of literature on what have now become known as “anti-deficit achievement” models.

***Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework***

**Summary and Key Ideas**: “Despite ongoing efforts to narrow representation inequities and racial achievement gaps in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, Black and Latino [students] continue to lag behind their White and Asian American counterparts,” writes Shaun R. Harper in his article, *An Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework for Research on Students of Color in STEM* (2010). Dr. Harper – a tenured faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania in the Graduate School of Education, Africana Studies, and Gender Studies – contends that much of mainstream thinking about the Achievement Gap is based on repetitive examination using deficit models. Harper describes frameworks that act as an alternate type of lens through which to explore the ‘enablers,’ as opposed to the ‘inhibitors’ of student achievement. The article places an emphasis on “reframing deficit-oriented research questions regarding students of color and their trajectories in STEM fields.” Harper reviews several examples of anti-deficit achievement frameworks which are informed by various theories from psychology, sociology, and education – each of which can be explored in an anti-deficit fashion. These include the following: Stereotype Threat Theory, Attribution Theory, Cultural Capital and Social Capital Theory, Self-efficacy Theory, Critical Race Theory, and the Possible Selves Theory. Harper advises that researchers “can use popular theories in uncommon ways to advance the study of minority student achievement.”

**Reflection and Analysis**: Despite all that we understand about what complicates and undermines achievement for students of color, much remains unknown about what empowers and enables them to succeed. Harper says anti-deficit frameworks are long overdue in the study of students of color – particularly in areas of academic achievement.

**Implications for Practice**: Dr. Harper’s work speaks to the fifth Authoritative Management principle:

* Becoming an effective classroom manager requires reflection, hard work, and time.

II. Preventive Management

***Incompetent Teachers***

**Summary and Key Ideas**: As a nation, we are in an ‘education moment.’ The debate rages over how to improve our schools and close the Achievement Gap. Ken Futernick enters the fray with his carefully crafted article: *Incompetent Teachers or Dysfunctional Systems? Re-framing the Debate on Teacher Quality and Accountability* (2010). Futernick says that those on all sides of the debate have found agreement on two fundamental matters concerning America’s schools:

(1) there is a large and unacceptable achievement gap between rich students on the one hand and poor and minority students on the other; and (2) improving *teacher quality* is the single most important thing policy makers and education officials can do to close this gap.

Despite the heated debate, effective solutions are hard to come by. Increasingly, researchers and policy makers are promoting what Futernick calls “a seemingly simple” solution: closely monitor, evaluate, and then remove all poor quality teachers from the system. In his article, Futernick scrutinizes and effectively rebuts the case in favor of teacher removal. The author then outlines an alternative approach to accountability which would require everyone in the system to be “mutually obligated” to one another. Futernick writes:

Under this notion of *reciprocal accountability*, people with greater authority don’t just monitor performance and impose sanctions when it is lacking; they are responsible for ensuring that the ones being monitored have what they need to be successful.

**Reflection and Analysis**: True or not, it is popularly believed poor teacher quality in the nation’s schools is the result of tenure policies that make it difficult to fire bad teachers. Regardless, Futernick reveals that firing all ineffective educators would do very little to improve our schools and narrow the achievement gap. “In many urban school districts,” he notes, “staffing statistics show that more good teachers are lost than bad ones are retained.” Teaching is a strangely demanding and difficult job. Considering opportunities to make more money with less stress, many talented teachers quickly move on to other professions. Although the debate is currently concentrated on the idea of removing bad teachers, Futernick maintains “attrition of effective teachers and mis-assignments do far more to diminish teacher quality (and student performance) than incompetence.”

**Implications for Practice**: Futernick’s article speaks to the fifth of Weinstein and Novodvorsky’s authoritative management principles:

* Becoming an effective classroom manager requires reflection, hard work, and time.

***Why We Must Fire Bad Teachers***

**Summary and Key Ideas**: In their article, *Why We Must Fire Bad Teachers* (2010), Evan Thomas and Pat Wingert report that globally, U.S. students have fallen in the rankings – and that within the country, the achievement gap stubbornly persists. “In recent years researchers have discovered that what really makes a difference” the authors say, “is the quality of the teacher.” They point out that often the weakest teachers end up teaching the neediest students – poor minority learners in struggling urban schools. Despite the importance of hiring good instructors and weeding out the ineffective ones, the authors say administrative systems are so weak and teachers' unions so powerful – “teachers are insulated from accountability.” Administrators routinely rate 99 percent of teachers as ‘satisfactory.’ Even in the case of an acknowledged unsatisfactory performance, Thomas and Wingert say firing such an instructor can be a slow, difficult, and often costly process.

**Reflection and Analysis**: The acute need for changes that will make it simpler to fire bad teachers is well summed up in the article through a quote from Kate Walsh, president of the National Council on Teacher Quality:

“There was [found] such a dramatic achievement gap in the United States, far larger than in other countries, between socioeconomic classes and races. It was a scandal of monumental proportions that there were two distinct school systems in the U.S., one for the middle class and one for the poor."

**Implications for Practice**: This article links to Weinstein and Novodvorsky’s second Authoritative Management principle:

* Most problems of disorder can be avoided if teachers foster positive teacher - student relationships, implement engaging instruction, and use good preventive management strategies.

III. Reflective Practices

***Ten Rookie Mistakes***

**Summary and Key Ideas**: The article, *Ten Rookie Mistakes of a First Year Teacher* (2007), is part of an abandoned blog apparently written by a “3rd year teaching fellow with the New York City Teaching Fellowship” – an alternative certification program – who identifies herself only as “Ms. C.” Whether a Ms. C. actually exists is impossible to determine. No other information or verification is provided on the now defunct website. Having been ill-prepared for her first year in the classroom, the writer calling herself Ms. C. imparts ten, ex post facto points of wisdom. Among her top ten mistakes, Mrs. C. mentions the failure to establish clear rules and routines, the making of empty threats to students, and an over-reliance on others to provide discipline.

**Reflection and Analysis**: Ms. C. failed to follow the very most basic rules of management. As a result, she spent her first year in the classroom correcting, punishing, and hiding from learners. The author makes no specific mention about the diversity of her class. We are given no real information about the students. No matter. The Multicultural Education outlook presumes – all classrooms are diverse. This is an important point about culturally responsive classroom management. It is an approach to running classrooms in a culturally responsive way with all children – not simply ethnic or so-called “racial” minority children. Certainly many of Ms. C’s rookie mistakes could have been corrected – or prevented altogether – with use of culturally responsive management strategies.

**Implications for Practice**: This article aligns with the first Authoritative Management principle:

* Successful classroom management promotes self- regulation.

***Culturally Responsive Classroom Management***

**Summary and Key Ideas**: *Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Strategies* (2008) is a publication from NYU’s Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. It is a concise, straight-forward report on culturally responsive teaching and management practices that lead to success in the multicultural classroom. Beyond inclusive strategies and reflective practices, culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM) is described as an overall pedagogical approach guiding the management decisions that teachers make. The goal of CRCM is not to achieve compliance or control, but rather, “to provide all students with equitable opportunities for learning. It is classroom management in the service of social justice.”

**Reflection and Analysis**: Speaking to *disproportionality* in urban schools, the report warns that “cultural competence of simply soley middle-class, White students” can lead to management and discipline problems. An instructor’s misreading or misinterpretation of the behaviors of culturally and linguistically diverse learners, combined with instructional planning designed through a single cultural lens “contributes to disproportionality in special education and discipline.”

**Implications for Practice**:

* Teachers must be “culturally responsive classroom managers.”

The essential elements of CRCM are distilled into the following five concepts:

* Recognition of one’s own cultural lens and biases;
* Knowledge of students’ cultural backgrounds;
* Awareness of the broader social, economic and political context;
* Ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate management strategies;
* Commitment to building caring classroom communities.

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