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CEP 883 – Reflection Summary

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Over the past 6 weeks, I have learned a great deal of strategies as it pertains to classroom management. More importantly, I beginning to finally comprehend how and why student behaviors occur in my class. Discussions with members of my group helped me to quantify how to address key issues; selected readings gave me a plethora of resources and ideas to better prepare me for the upcoming school year.

With all the skills and knowledge I have acquired in class, I would be remiss if I did not take the time to summarize all that CEP 883 had to offer. This reflection summary will address the key concepts and ideals found within each module. I will give an overview of each modules main point of emphasis. Afterwards, I will then reflect on the big idea (or ideas) that I took from each of them.

In Module 1, we spent a considerable amount of time discussing and analyzing evidence-based strategies that could create more intrinsic motivation within children. Setting up a positive classroom culture and establishing strong personal bonds between students and teachers was a topic of conversation. Within our own professional learning community, we engaged in team building exercises to introduce ourselves, with the goal of establishing self-to-self connection. The framework for the course was also presented; not necessarily in context, but rather in identifying the reasoning behind what we were going to learn about.

Looking back to Module 1, the biggest takeaway I took away from our coursework was just how important motivation is to student achievement. Urdan (2006) makes a connection

between positive feelings and mastery goals (goals that reflect an individual's knowledge on a subject). To further elaborate, it is not simply a matter of giving students generic praise (whether it is academic or non-academic). The key to student achievement - in getting them to have a strong self-efficacy - is for them to feel good about themselves academically. I can now see how vital it is to establish a nurturing classroom from the first day of school. By giving my students choices, being clear with my expectations and directions utilizing CHAMPS, and getting them to see the reasoning behind the content I teach, I will be able to set up the learning environment I envision next year.

The focal point of Module 2 was on strengthening the bonds between students, teachers, and parents. As Jones and Jones (2013) pointed out in Chapter 4, the development of this these bonds – within the school and the community – is important, "Not only because students tend to show improved academic achievement...but…it can also help students decrease racism, harassment, and stereotyping." It is not simply enough to grow a child academically (a notion I thought previously to the Module). Rather, it is also extremely valuable to teach students social and life skills to prepare them to be responsible citizens.

Originally, my takeaway from Module 2 was how vital it is to teach students (and subsequently, adults) using a variety of methods to address the bevy of multiple intelligences and learning styles that are found within a group. While I still feel that was a sound takeaway – especially in light of what was discussed in upcoming Modules – I now feel the *best* takeaway from Module 2 was that I now understand the thought process of building positive relationships with my students. I appreciated how pages 278 – 301 of CHAMPS presented the 4 tasks that go into creating the type of culture I envisioned after Module 1.

I fully plan on making myself aware of Task 3: *Intermittent Celebrations* as I learn and grow with my students; while I am strong on precise and positive feedback to individuals, I know I can do a better job of offering constructive feedback to the class. I liked the Badges and Buttons idea, found on page 295. The students at my school would wear something like that proudly – even students in 6th grade!

Proactive classroom management techniques were extensively discussed in Module 3. Creating an effective set of standards can help reduce the amount of behavioral issues; an example of this is having a CHAMPS board in the front of the room that lets students know what the noise level should be, or how to ask for assistance (these are the C and H in the CHAMPS model). Another concept heavily discussed in my group was the idea of creating a sound philosophy of rules and expectations developed by teachers and students. Jones and Jones (2013) discussed the main reasons behind establishing and tracking these behavior standards: student learning improves greatly within the confines of a safe climate, and they benefit from learning about and exercising their rights as citizens (pg. 170). Our group (myself included) all saw the merits of a positive collaboration between all members of the learning community.

When examining my teaching practices in my classroom, I felt that I was creating a similar collaboration with my students. I (begrudgingly) realized that all of the effort my school put into instructing and coaching teachers on how to create an authentic, "breathing" document for addressing the norms and expectations were to be followed throughout the year was extremely proactive 6 years ago. This contract should be something that is agreed upon and upheld by teachers, students, and parents. It is important to supplement CHAMPS procedures and a classroom contract with consistent and effective reinforcement and review. I learned that I

should take the time to review rules and procedures on a frequent basis, even if I think that my students fully understand (Jones & Jones 171).

Modules 4 and 5 – and to a degree, Module 6 – all dealt with creating a Positive Behavior System (PBS) and analyzing the effect extrinsic motivation has on students. In accordance with the Michigan Department of Education Implementation Guide (2010), a School – wide Positive Behavior System is a "proactive, team-based framework for creating and sustaining safe and effective schools" (VII).The unit focused on identifying key steps to make a functional PBS within our classrooms. One such step was looking at how extrinsic motivation affected our classroom environment: were we using outside enforcers excessively, or were they used in unison with intrinsic motivation (discussed in Module 1)?

Reviewing the readings and group discussions, I recognized I had a number of takeaways. I learned that behavior of my students is based off of the assumptions that it [behavior] is influenced by antecedents and consequences, and that a subsequent behavior changing program should examine specific issues, accompanied with data collection (Jones & Jones 347). It is with this knowledge that I continued to development a growth mindset about the disciplinary issues faced in my class.

First and foremost, I now see that before addressing creating a behavior plan for a student, I need to first look at what issues are being presented in class. Then, I have to review all of the steps I am – and am not – doing to assist the student in dealing with these issues. For example, am I offering preferential seating? Am I eliminating wait time in my lessons? Have I given the student adequate time to address their issue? That growth mindset led me to look at Figure 10.5 (The Countoon) within CHAMPS as well.

This takeaway connects into my other another realization that occurred: the behavior will only change if there is an honest effort by both myself and my students. The reproducible mentioned prior gives the student a chance to be accountable for their actions. I used to believe that their behavior was solely a reflection of my own teaching methods and practices. Now, I see that students need to be able to self-reflect to authentically change their mindset.

Of all that ideas I learned in this course, I think the best takeaway was that I constantly need to reflect and hone on what the best practices are for understanding the classroom management and psychology of my students. Taking CEP 883 helped me to start the rather large process of quantifying the strengths of my classroom management and reward practices; because of that, I find it quite fitting that I am winding down my MAED program by taking a class that will help me greatly in the near future.

CEP 883 Review:

1) My favorite thing(s) about the course were: getting an update version of CHAMPS – my previous one was the first edition. The other favorite thing was reflecting on issues I had as a child in the classroom. It made me realize all of the small moments that helped led me into teaching.
2) If I could change anything, I would have liked to have more whole class discussions. In another class, we utilized Google Chats; it just brought everyone together even more. I also was not a big fan of the staggered due dates (M-T, W-S, S)…sometimes it was hard to not feel rushed. Also, Saturday at Noon seemed somewhat early for me as an end time; although I can only imagine the time it takes to read that much work.
3) I meant a great deal with Dr. Lien took the time to offer me examples of what strong weekly writings looked like to her. It helped me shape my future Module reflections, and showed me that she was actually reading and responding to what I was saying. It was a nice, personal touch, and really made me appreciate the class even more.