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EDU 539

Reflection 3

**Reinforcing Effort and Providing Recognition In the Classroom**

Classroom instruction which utilizes strategies and techniques to reinforce efforts and provide recognition “addresses students’ attitudes and beliefs.” (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004, p. 49-50). I support this concept. I firmly believe that the concept of providing students’ instruction, which reinforces efforts and provides recognition; will ultimately build students’ self-confidence and self-worth.

When I examined Covington’s research, I was somewhat confused by the statement, “Regardless of how much ability you think you have, however, there will inevitably be tasks for which you do not believe you have the requisite skill.” (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004, p. 50). I understand that not every student is at the point where they “realize the importance of believing in effort,” and that “students can learn to change their beliefs to an emphasis on effort.” (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004, p. 50). Is Covington’s statement meant merely for children and young adults? If it was intended for adults, I would have to disagree with this statement.

The reason for my disagreement would be that, I believe there are some adults who possess enough self-confidence, and belief in themselves, to overcome whatever obstacles they may face. For example, if I were faced the loss of a job, which was actually my career; I would choose to reevaluate my situation, and use my skills in an alternative career field. I am not saying this with conceit; I am merely saying that life has taught me to “make lemonade out of lemons.” I also am fortunate enough to have built the self-confidence needed to reason in this manner. An unwanted and unexpected, change of careers would not be easy; however, I believe that I could use my existing skills, and build upon them, to make a successful career adjustment. If I am misinterpreting the research Covington presents in this text, I would kindly appreciate a more detailed explanation of how he intends this statement to be interpreted by the reader.

Upon completion of this reading, I spent time observing students in the various classes where I am currently substitute teaching. Two statements which I heard students say quite frequently were, “I can’t do this,” or “I can’t find it.” I observed that when some students were faced with a task, which required that they read and interpret a text, or complete a difficult math problem; some students simply gave up out of frustration. I certainly can empathize with how these students felt, as I have had these same feelings. I observed that the first thing which the teacher must do is, ask the student, “What is it about this question you do not understand?” When the teacher takes time to determine if the student is having difficulty comprehending and interpreting text while reading, or solving a math problem; the teacher is then able to determine how they might best help the student find a solution to their frustration. I did observe that there are some students, who simply want someone else to do the work for them. Each student’s efforts are different. A teacher should recognize that the needs of their students vary, and work to build their students’ self-confidence and self-worth. Positive affirmation of students’ efforts is one strategy a teacher can utilize to accomplish this task.

When teachers share personal examples in classroom practice, they are reinforcing students’ efforts. (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004, p. 51). As presented in our classroom, Mrs. Egbert’s unit plan and lesson plan are primary examples of positive reinforcement methods. The personal examples which a teacher provides, adds a personal touch to the classroom instruction. A student’s efforts can increase, when they are provided a positive example of the work which the teacher expects of them. Simply “teaching about effort” (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004, p. 52) is not enough; students need to be able to see “the connection between effort and achievement.” (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004, p. 52).

Until I started substitute teaching, I did not understand why some students were provided rewards, such as candy, in a classroom. I looked at providing candy, as a way to bribe the students in to completing their assignments. My first reaction was, “Why reward the students for something that is expected of them—learning?” After observing how the technique, of using candy, is used in a way to praise students for work well done; I have determined that this can be a positive way to motivate and recognize student achievement. For example, I recently observed a classroom where the teacher used candy to praise her students’ efforts while orally answering questions on a worksheet. The teacher and students worked together to review the worksheet, after each student had individually completed the worksheet. This teacher was very successful in providing instruction to support each student’s academic and personal growth.

A teacher may combine the “Pause, Prompt and Praise” strategy (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004, p. 58) and “tangible rewards” to motivate and provide recognition. (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004, p. 57-59). If the teacher uses candy or other tangible rewards, it is important to incorporate verbal affirmation of praise into the motivation and recognition process. It is also essential, to stop and pause when using this strategy. This is done so that the teacher can address issues or questions which are causing students some difficulty. (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004, p. 58-59).

I conclude that, the goals of positive recognition is to motivate the students’ achievement, build the students’ self-confidence, and help students gain self-worth—“the harder you try, the more successful you are.” (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004, p. 59).

Reference:

Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollock, J. E. (2004). *Classroom instruction that works*.

United States: ASCD.