

Creating a Better Classroom Culture

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If we expect students to thrive in a Common Core classroom, we're going to need to upgrade the culture within that room. As opposed to the obedience-based model that's been used for years upon years, I recommend we create a new one.

A good start would be to promote the following four character traits:

Self-determination
Conceptual thinking
Creativity
Productivity

And from what I've been able to discover, these critical traits are best acquired by students when there is a bit of freedom in the classroom.

With that in mind, here are three simple strategies that will promote the development of a classroom culture that values freedom, self-control, and independence.

Gaining Attention to Start a Lesson

1. Don't use your _____.
2. Pick a spot in the room, assume a certain pose, and wait.
3. Maybe use a countdown timer they can all see.

Distributing Materials to Students

1. Don't use your _____.
2. Don't pass it out yourself.
3. Make the whole thing a simple routine.

Announcing Page Numbers

1. Don't use your _____.
2. Write the page number on the white board.
3. Use a sound to draw attention to the page number.

The Freedom List

Freedom is one of the five basic student needs identified by William Glasser. This simple strategy will enable you to extend freedom to your students so that they can develop self-control.

Read: *Setting Limits in the Classroom* by Robert MacKenzie. [half.ebay.com for a great price]

Every school year, around week six, I'd offer my students the freedom to work away from their assigned desks. They had already gained enough insight into how our classroom operated that they understood I expected them to exhibit self-control. The new freedom was introduced to raise the bar a bit higher.

Where the students decided to work was up to them. It may have been a large table that was normally used for group work or the empty seat of an absent student. Maybe it was a spot on the carpet or a wall they would lean against. Whatever. All we asked was that the move helped the student be productive.

Note: Anyone working on the carpet or leaning against a wall was encouraged to use a clipboard to keep their writing legible.

A roster of names was created and pinned to a bulletin board or taped to one of the walls in some convenient place. Anyone who moved but got off task was returned to his regular seat. A line was then drawn through the student's name on list. A line through your name meant you were confined to your desk for the remainder of the week.

On Monday, a new roster was posted so that everyone was given a fresh start.

Work Away

Week of: October 21

Aliya

Alric

Briann

~~Calvin~~

CJ

Jack

~~Karena~~

Katie

~~Keir~~

Kevin

Lauren

Marwa

~~Matt~~

~~Nui~~

Peter

~~Samantha~~

Shane

Waleed