Classroom Environment Reflection

“The classroom should be an entrance into the world, not an escape from it.” – John Ciardi

The classroom environment sets the tone for the learning making it vital to be considered from the onset of the year. The classroom should remain a student centered environment where all members of the classroom community feel respected, cared for, and a sense of investment in its success. Every action the educator takes has a direct impact on the classroom environment making it an area requiring great thought and anticipation.

For me, the establishment of the classroom community starts from the first day. I believe that in order to have an immediate investment in the classroom and its members, it is important for students to feel they have a role in developing the classroom rules. I feel that these rules should encompass three major categories: be safe, be responsible, and be respectful. With this end result in mind, I guide my students towards formulating specific rules, later signing the final document. I then strive to keep students accountable for their actions and ensure that they are aware of consequences to avoid any surprises.

I believe that it is important to foster a positive classroom environment and inspire students to make good choices. To do this, one of the items I employ is a marble jar. Students receive marbles for positive behavior but can also lose marbles for poor choices. This allows me to communicate to my students the impression I have of their behavior, sometimes even non-verbally. Once students have filled the marble jar, a classroom reward is earned, reinforcing their good choices.

In order for students to feel valued within the classroom, it is important that the educator value their thoughts and feelings. To help my students feel this, I use a gradual release of hand raising within my small
groups. Within the initial meetings with my small groups, I find that it is helpful for students to raise their hands to prevent them interrupting each other during discussions. As they grow to know one another, I gradually begin allowing them to participate in a more free flowing discussion.

Discussion is a key element within a collaborative classroom. One important role of the educator is to be able to regain student attention without cutting off the sharing of significant ideas. To allow my students time to wrap up their ideas before redirecting their attention to me, I ask them for eyes and ears in 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. By doing this, I allow students to wrap up their current discussion points before returning attention to me. Showing my students that I respect their thoughts and discussions can inspire them to show me the same respect in return.

From the moment they enter the classroom, students should feel motivated and inspired and know that it is a place of learning. This is established through not only classroom environment, but also the attitude of the teacher. Each year, I make it my mission to get to know each student both academically and personally. I take an interest in my students' lives and make a point to check in with each one individually to see how things are going. This simple act helps students know you care and motivates them to do their best on a daily basis. Together, student and teacher collaborate to create an environment of respect and hard work in order to be most successful.