

Artifact:

Domain Two, Managing Student Behavior

This artifact is not a physical piece of evidence, but rather, a story. During third quarter at Timberline High School this year, I was teaching Sociology, 11th grade U.S. History, and 12th grade Government. When only having a quarter to teach, it was imperative for me to build quick, positive relationships with my students. A few weeks in things were running quite smoothly. However, in one of my government courses, a student from another class transferred over. This was his third transfer out of a government class. Needless to say, he did not seem to care too much about school.

About a week into his transfer, he was starting to give me some attitude. While other students were working, he was distracting others or trying to play on his phone. It was becoming quite frustrating. At the end of one class, students finished a couple minutes early and began getting ready to leave. This student decided to try exiting the room before the bell rang. I saw him and yelled in front of the whole class, "because you chose to do that, you get to leave the class last." His response was, "what if I don't?". Obviously that fired me up as I gave him the classic teacher glare. The bell rang and he bolted out before anyone else.

This was a challenging moment for me. We both stood up to one another in front of the whole class, and their eyes were on me. I had three options. One, let it go for the day. Two, find an administrator and have him/her get involved. Lastly, chase him down and have a stern conversation in that moment. The latter two were the most tempting, because I was so frustrated. However, I sat down, took a couple deep breaths, and tried putting myself in his shoes.

As he was at the door, he got called out in a mildly shameful way in front of the whole class. He was already feeling vulnerable in this new class that was such a tight knit community. Naturally, me yelling out to him in the way I did would be embarrassing, so his defensive remark makes sense. It doesn't make it okay, but it does make sense. I decided to have a conversation with him the next day.

In the middle of the day, outside of our class period, I found this student and politely asked if we could chat for a few minutes. First thing I did was apologize. I explained what I assumed his side would be and how he felt, and I apologized for doing that to him. This quickly tore down some walls between us, and he began sharing things going on in his life, which somewhat explains why he reacted the way he did. He apologized as well. Following this, he was quite engaged in the class and seemed to be enjoying himself.

What this story shows is how I view managing student behavior. Yes, each class needs rules, expectations, and procedures. Boundaries are good because the structure allows them to know how to be successful. However, the core to managing student behavior is developing quality relationships with them. If you have a good relationship with your students, then the majority of the time they are on your side. As this story shows, I reflect. I challenge my way of thinking for the benefit of the students' success. Managing behavior is not about me holding power, it's about me holding genuine relationships with my students.