

REFLECTION

In the readings by Brophy, I have learned the importance of socializing the class to work together in cooperative learning environments. Socializing students is not something that can only be taught within the classroom walls, but extends into their lives beyond the school hallways. Socialization is a life lesson that will benefit students in their future endeavors. In my past experiences of working with students with challenging behaviors, I never considered that my actions were considered socialization of students. When students seem to have disagreements, I always taught them to work it out amongst themselves and taught them problem-solving strategies. Helpful stances for teaching involve plenty of patience, instructing the students about appropriate behavior, and having a good foundation with classroom management. If a classroom lacks management, then there are no guidelines to help students follow proper behavior in working with each other or with others in the school. In Brophy's book Teaching Problem Students, he provides many applications and strategies to use in socialization of the classroom and individual students.

The approaches mentioned by Brophy are: modeling, instruction, reinforcement, positive expectations, authoritative figure, helping skills, and disciplinary interventions (pgs. 20-21). As a teacher I am aware of each of these approaches in managing a classroom, but was unaware of how to use some of them in practice with students of challenging behaviors. For example, I have used modeling and positive expectations in trying to socialize challenging students, but have not explicitly instruct an individual student the appropriate social skills. I have explained that the behavior needs to change, but have not always explained why it needs to change. Other applications that Brophy discusses are cueing, using various forms of reinforcement, satiation, extinction, and punishment (pgs. 24-34). Brophy explains each of these applications and ways that the teacher can use them in the classroom with difficult students. Other applications that are mentioned are for teachers to conference with parents and build the home-school relationship and the importance of it. Each of Brophy's applications can be helpful in practice, but it depends on the class and individual students. Some applications may work in theory, but not in practice.

Some of the applications that seem to work or be helpful in my experiences are the approaches first mentioned above. Each of these approaches has worked for me, especially with my early elementary experience. I have realized that at the early elementary level the students view the teacher as an authority figure and respect what s/he says. However, I would be interested to see how some of the approaches work with the older children. Brophy's approaches of using cueing, positive reinforcement, and punishment have worked with my past students. Sometimes giving non-verbal cues to students is enough, but other times it needs to extend to a friendly verbal reminder to the student. Also, I have found positive reinforcement to be my best friend. Many students respond better to positive reinforcement than they do to the negative reinforcement. As Brophy explains, positive reinforcements can be material, social, or activity rewards (pg. 25). In my experiences I have used material rewards to engage students by using pencils or stickers, and when students become a major disciplinary problem I found that I tend to use more social or activity rewards. These social or activity rewards include extended computer time, working with a friend, or allowing them to have a friend help them complete a job or task. Another form of reinforcement that I found worked was using effective praise when teaching or when students were working. When I praise one student for their correct behavior, sometimes the student misbehaving would change their behavior so that they could be praised. Using effective praise would help during instruction, individual work time, and even lining up to leave the classroom. When there is a student who doesn't respond to any of the strategies, then I

usually use punishment in the form of a time out. This allows the student time to be away from the environment that is making them want to misbehave and gives them an opportunity to think through the problem and find a solution. Many of Brophy's applications were used in my past experiences in helping socialize students into the classroom, and many times more than one application was used for students.

There are a couple of applications of Brophy that I didn't find helpful or applicable in some situations. One of the applications was satiation, where Brophy explains that the misbehavior will eventually stop on its own (pg. 29). I feel that if a student exhibits challenging behavior, that by ignoring it and letting it run its course will allow the student to feel in control, and they could get away with misbehaving. Certain children in my past experiences seemed to never get bored in their behavior and continued to misbehave until it was addressed. Negative reinforcement is another application that I feel has not worked for me in the past. I have held students behind from lunch or recess or from going to a "special" (gym, music, art, etc.) for their behavior, and many times it didn't seem to change their behavior for the future. I understand how it could work for the classroom as a whole or for some students, but in my experiences it didn't work when I have used it. Depending on the class and the students, there are some strategies that work better for others and some that simply do not work, but I feel that the teacher needs to find a strategy that works for individual students to help socialize them into the classroom.

One strategy that I feel is beneficial to the socialization of students is the home-school collaborative relationship. This is an application that needs to be initiated at the start of the school year and continued throughout the year. Teachers need to try to understand their students and where they are coming from, and talking with parents will provide the best insight to what happens outside of school. Brophy explains that when teachers are trying to find solutions, the best partners are the parents, because when the family is involved the student seems to have a higher success rate with having a positive attitude towards school and higher academic achievement (pg. 49). It is important for the teacher to express concern and remain positive towards the future. However, sometimes families are not always interested in being involved, but it's imperative for the teacher to try to establish a foundation with parents through communication. I have worked in urban schools where there were parents at two ends of spectrum from being very involved in coming to all school functions and turning homework in on time, to uninvolved and not sending their child to school. I found that when I expressed concern, many parents had the same concerns and we would talk out some solutions together that could be used in school as well as at home. The majority of the time, when parents were involved, the child's behavior seemed to get better and they began to have a better attitude towards school. Parents are our partners in providing the best education for the students, because teachers only have the students for about six hours a day, and the rest needs to be continued and done at home.

Reading and discussing the contemplations and feelings I have in working with students with challenging behaviors has given me the opportunity to reflect on my past experiences and learn from others. In the group discussions it was helpful to hear about my group members' experiences and feelings toward their challenging students. When I read about how one member felt like the students were like a puzzle that needed to be figured out, and how rewarding it was to solve the puzzle, I felt the exact same. I feel like I would always be thinking about my challenging students and what I could do to help socialize them and make school better for them. Many times I would feel guilty, because I thought more about my puzzling students than I did the general class. Another idea that came to me when writing in the discussion forum was the home-school relationship. I felt that some of my students who were challenging had parents who were uninvolved. This made it difficult to socialize the student, when there was a lack of respect toward authority figures. When it came to dealing with students with challenging behaviors during my teaching, I found it very difficult for me to deal with the lack of respect they had towards others, whether it were teachers or their peers. I would address the issue promptly,

but when the behavior would continue, I would communicate with parents, who were uninvolved, and sometimes felt like I didn't know where to go forward in socializing the student. When I would come to "dead ends" I would start over and try to look at the behavior from a fresh perspective and continue to try new strategies and approaches. What I found through the reflections was that when working with challenging students I never gave up. There would be times that others would tell me to just send him or her to the administrator to deal with. However, I couldn't because I knew it was something I had to address in the classroom (with some administrative support), otherwise leaving the room would feel like a reward! Reflecting on past experiences with what worked and didn't helped me to work with students with challenging behaviors in the future, because I have the experiences to draw on for support and ideas.