Teaching Matters

Classroom Etiquette in the 21st Century
By
Dr. Spencer Baker, Faculty Associate for Assessment
Dr. Leona Johnson, Faculty Associate for Pedagogy
Dr. Zina McGee, Faculty Associate for Research
Dr. Arun Verma, Faculty Associate for Technology

Scenario

Professor Sally has had a terrible, but somewhat normal morning. It seems like the world is designed to ensure that she does not make it to campus on time. She is four minutes late for her class, but she is not worried about the students because the unwritten law is that she can be fifteen minutes late. Although Professor Sally has not recently reviewed the material being covered today, she is not concerned since she has taught this course for decades and needs no preparation. As she goes into the classroom, students are talking and eating. Some students are on their cell phones and others are catching a quick breakfast. Professor Sally ignores the students, and gets her material ready for class. She turns to the students and starts lecturing. They ignore her. Professor Sally continues with her lecture and needs to make a point. She goes to the Whiteboard, but there are no markers available, so she asks if one of the students has a marker. A student provides a permanent marker to Professor Sally and she makes her point by writing on the Whiteboard. As Professor Sally continues to lecture from her memory, she feels uncomfortable because the students are not really paying attention to her, and many are still eating and on their cell phones. Before she realizes, the class period is over. Students begin walking out before Professor Sally dismisses them. As she leaves the classroom, there is paper left on the floor from the students who were eating. Professor Sally didn't have time to get the students to clean up, so she leaves the classroom with the lights still on, the Whiteboard still marked with writings, and trash still on the floor. She wonders if students will ever change and give her the respect she deserves. Professor Sally also wonders if she will ever find time to learn how to use Blackboard or even PowerPoint. But then again, she ponders, why is it even necessary to change a teaching approach to use technology in the classroom? As she goes out to look for her own breakfast, Professor Sally knows she has office hours now, but the students can wait until she returns. ***Are you Professor Sally?***

In an environment that instills academic excellence, it is expected that the classroom will be a learning community, with respect to <u>all</u> if its members, including the students and the instructor. Professor Sally is responsible for

creating and maintaining an effective learning community in which her students are continually engaged in productive activities. While this can be challenging, it is something that she should start well before the first day of class. Research consistently indicates that the quality of teacher-student relationships is one of the most important factors – perhaps the most important factor – affecting students' emotional well-being, motivation, and learning during the school day (Ormond, 2011). As she reconsiders her role, Professor Sally may want to implement the following strategies:

- **Communicate care, concern, and respect for students regularly.**

- **Promote a general sense of community in the classroom.**

- **Provide guidelines for what constitutes acceptable behavior.**

- **Enforce guidelines consistently and equitably.**

- **Demonstrate that unacceptable behavior has documented consequences.**

Hence, Professor Sally's overall objective should be *to create a productive learning environment and community* at all times to achieve academic excellence. She should *stay abreast of new teaching strategies* while remaining current in conducting research within her specified field of study. In fact, her own research may be defined as ongoing and cumulative intellectual inquiry into the nature of teaching and learning in her own classroom. In her role as professional scholar and teacher, she should *attend her classes, begin and complete those classes on time, and maintain her office hours as scheduled* throughout each week. To create a more respectful, productive learning environment, *students should not be allowed to eat in her classroom, nor should they be allowed to talk on their cell phones* during her instruction. If she is using a Whiteboard, she should *come prepared for her classes by bringing the necessary materials,* making sure that *she cleans the board before she leaves.* She should be mindful to *use a dry erase marker instead of a permanent marker on a Whiteboard.* If her classrooms have interactive Whiteboards, she should never use a dry erase marker or permanent marker on them. These are meant to be used with a computer and proprietary software. She should also *be respectful of her colleagues* and their students *by ensuring that she leaves the classroom devoid of any trash, with desks neatly arranged, and the lights and equipment turned off.* A sense of community in the classroom validates a sense of shared goals which are mutually supported; *everyone makes an important contribution to learning* including the teacher and the students.

Regarding enhancing skills and knowledge, Professor Sally's reluctance to extend her method of instruction beyond the Whiteboard suggests that she is not using technology as a tool or as a support for communicating with her students, and that she is perhaps instead placing her students in the passive role of recipient of information transmitted by a worn legal pad and textbook. Her students may then become less likely to make choices about how to generate, obtain, manipulate, or display information. Moreover, *when technology is used as a tool to support students in performing authentic tasks, they are in the position of defining their goals, making design*

decisions, and evaluating their progress (Pitler et al., 2012). Although she may not be aware, the infusion of technology into her classroom would allow Professor Sally's role to change. She may also find that ***effective learning environments do not always have to be one-on-one.*** Technology, for example, can be used to expand students' interactions beyond the classroom and can expand students' communication with peers and outside experts as well as the teacher.

As a result of her changing role, Professor Sally may find that she may no longer be the center of attention as the dispenser of information but rather, she would play the role of facilitator, setting project goals and providing guidelines and resources, moving from student-to-student or group-to-group, providing suggestions and support for student activity. As students work on their technology-supported products such as "Clickers," she can rotate through the room, looking over shoulders, asking about the reasons for various design choices, and suggesting resources that might be used. In fact, ***tool uses of technology*** would be highly compatible with her new role, since they ***stimulate so much active mental work on the part of students.*** Moreover, if part of the venue for her work were to be technology, she may actually find herself, as she presents her material through "Prezi," joined by many students who are technology savvy and eager to share their knowledge with others through digital means. She may even find that her ***students are able to handle more complex assignments with higher-order skills from the supports and capabilities provided by technology.*** Additionally, they may work cooperatively and provide peer tutoring since many technology-based tasks involve many subtasks such as reviewing course material with "Clickers." If Professor Sally were to broaden her experiences by developing a rich, multimedia product with technology, she would support a greater awareness of her students' needs, and she would give them choices about how best to convey a given idea (e.g., through text, video, or animation from a "Prezi" demonstration). She may actually find herself pleasantly surprised at the level of technology-based accomplishment displayed by her students who have shown much less initiative or ability with more conventional academic tasks.

References

Ormrod, J. E. (2011). *Educational Psychology: Developing Learners*. Seventh Edition. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Pitler, Howard, Hubbell, Elizabeth, and Kunn, Matthew (2012). *Using Technology With Classroom Instruction That Works,* 2nd edition, New York, NY: ASCD.

Announcements

Student Success and The Quality Agenda
April 4-6, 2013
Hilton Miami Downtown, Miami, Florida
http://www.aacu.org/meetings/studentsuccess13/

Join with colleagues to examine the most important but least discussed component of the completion agenda—quality in student learning—and to investigate the latest research on high-impact educational practices and

teaching approaches, student services, and assessment strategies that both strengthen the quality of student learning and close achievement gaps. Plenary Speakers include Eduardo Padrón, president of Miami Dade College; Carol Geary Schneider, president of AAC&U; Shaun Harper, director of the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education, University of Pennsylvania; Valerie Purdie-Vaughns, assistant professor of Psychology, Columbia University; and Ann Ferren, senior fellow at AAC&U. Register now online at www.aacu.org.

Transforming STEM Education: Submit Proposals Now
October 31 – November 2, 2013
Westin Gaslamp Quarter, San Diego, California
http://www.aacu.org/meetings/stem/13/index.cfm

AAC&U and PKAL are pleased to announce the call for proposals for the 2013 conference Transforming STEM Education: Inquiry, Innovation, Inclusion, and Evidence. This national convening of leading academic and STEM professionals will showcase evidence-based practices that are poised for immediate adaptation in a wide range of institutional types, including community colleges and minority-serving institutions. Of particular interest will be proposals that effectively integrate two or more of the conference themes. Proposals are due April 11, 2013. More information about the call for proposals is online at www.aacu.org.

Resources and Podcasts from AAC&U's 2013 Annual Meeting Now Available

AAC&U has posted many PowerPoint presentations and handouts from the 2013 Annual Meeting, as well as links to additional information about projects, programs, and publications. (Papers and online resources based on presentations from the E-Portfolio Forum will be available soon.) Podcasts of the Annual Meeting's opening and closing plenary sessions, and other featured sessions, are now available on AAC&U's podcast page. Many registrants conveyed their appreciation for the Opening Forum with Jose Antonio Bowen, and we are pleased to provide this link to his Teaching Naked blog, http://teachingnaked.com/blog/.

PKAL 2013 Summer Leadership Institute Applications Now Available

The PKAL Summer Leadership Institute is designed for early and mid-career STEM faculty engaged in leading projects aimed at transforming undergraduate STEM education in their classrooms, departments, and institutions. These five-day intensive institutes provide faculty participants with the theory and practice required to act as agents of change in their home institutions or professional societies. Institutes are held in the heart of the Rocky Mountains at the Baca Campus of Colorado College in Crestone, Colorado. PKAL is in its fifteenth year of offering the Summer Leadership Institutes. Application materials are online now at www.aacu.org.

PKAL Spring Regional Meetings in North Carolina and New York

The North Carolina PKAL regional network will hold its spring meeting on

April 5, 2013, in conjunction with the North Carolina Academy of Science Annual Meeting. In addition, the PKAL Upstate New York regional network will meet on April 13, 2013, to explore the theme *Wake Up Your STEM Classroom! Active Learning and Hands-On Techniques.* See www.aacu.org for more details.

AAC&U Invites Nominations for 2014 Frederic W. Ness Book Award

AAC&U invites nominations for the 2014 Ness Book Award. The award recognizes a book that contributes to the understanding and improvement of liberal education. The award, $2,000, was established in 1979 to honor AAC&U's president emeritus, Frederic W. Ness. A mark of distinction for both authors and publishers, it is presented at AAC&U's annual meeting. For information about nomination and selection criteria, please visit the Ness Award Web page or visit www.aacu.org for more information.