



The Teacher's Playbook: Practical Pedagogy for Classical Educators with Jerilyn Olson

Lecture 4: Culture: Growing Culture

Outline:

Student success is tied to the culture we develop in our classroom. Through this culture teachers communicate a love for their students and their content allowing the students to trust them. This also provides an environment where students are comfortable to be wrong and push their limits.

Growing Culture

- There must be cooperation in process, recognizing the will and ability of the child in the process
- Teacher should be sensitive to the process and should be guiding but not forcing the student
- Teachers should keep a perspective primarily on what is good, looking ahead and not constantly behind.

Creating a Culture of Learning

- Teachers should love their students, if students know they are loved then they will trust the teacher in the learning process.
- Teachers should communicate a love of what they teach. Students will love what you love, hate what you hate.
- It is ok to fake the love of a subject until you can develop it.
- A teacher needs to find what is good and beautiful in the discipline and then reveal that to the student.
- Teachers should not need to apologize for our content.
- Teachers need to watch how they speak about the material avoiding words like boring or really hard.
- All things have benefits including things such as standardized tests.
- A sense of community is built from the love we have for the students and the content. It also allows the student to learn to respect and love each other.

Culture of Conversation

- Teachers should instill interactions that build respectful dialog and listening in the classroom.
- We build a sense of community through creating roles and identities as servant leaders.
- We should build students to not only leaders but also good followers.
- We should teach students that we all participate in community whether we want that role or not.



- We can learn to build virtue by doing our best work no matter what it is and contributing to the good of the whole.

Development of Virtue

- In younger grades we build habits of observation, patience, listening and attentiveness.
- In slightly older students' habits may include humility, patience and kindness.
- Students in older grades need to be taught the power of responsibility within freedom and a sense for piety and respect for all that they have learned and will learn.

Rituals of the Classroom

- Rituals are similar to the routines and procedures but they celebrate something joyful related to what was learned.
 - For example: a great feast after learning about Rome and Greece or a graduation celebration.
- Through rituals, thoughtfulness and intentionality cultivate a sense of care, community and identity.

Learning

- We should have high expectations for students. Techniques used to communicate these expectations include:
 - No opt out: If student does not know the answer you do not give up until they know the answer.
 - Give wait time.
 - Come back to the student after moving on to another student, asking the same question giving them a chance to participate in the right answer.
 - Have another student start the answer or provide a prompt to the student to help lead them to the answer
 - Right is Right: Prompt the students to make a complete answer if they give a partial answer. Acknowledge their effort and push them to go a step further. Students need to use complete sentence.
 - Stretch it: Ask students to continue their answer, pushing them a further step in their thinking.
- Our goal is to relentlessly pursue the truth and yet encourage each other, acknowledging that pursuing truth often requires making mistakes.

Growth Mindset

- A growth mindset will remove the fear of rejection.
- Taking away the fear of being wrong helps convince our students we love them and there is a path towards truth.
- Some students may believe they were born with abilities in one area and not in another and that this will not change.



- Liberal Art curriculum believes that all students are capable of interacting across the disciplines and that it is important for development.
- A fear of getting things wrong and being labeled as dumb may prevent a student from challenging themselves.
- The brain is malleable.
- A growth mindset allows us to believe we can develop all of our skills overtime and with practice.
- We should encourage honest mistakes and explain that getting the wrong answer just provides an opportunity to get the correct answer.
- Teachers should encourage students to keep trying.
- Teachers can create opportunities where no matter what a student choose to do, they are answering the question
 - For example, have all students stand or sit if they agree with the question. For stubborn students arrange that the correct answer to the question is what they choose to do (sit or stand). Have them explain why they think that is the correct answer.

Praise

- Praise can be a help or a detraction to the right type of culture we are trying to create in the classroom.
- Praise can be overblown; a student could be embarrassed by the praise or the student could contradict what you have said.
- Praise does not always provide enough feedback for some students who are looking for ways to improve.
- Praise should be precise and helpful.
- Teachers can praise the effort instead of the results.
- Teachers can give simple acknowledgement at to the behavior and keep them striving for more with out always telling them they reached the end.

Rewards

- Rewards can be a trap. For example:
 - All good things should be rewarded
 - Using a prize box to bribe students to a particular behavior.
- Rewards may work for a limited time but are often not sustainable.
- Rewards may have the opposite effect; some students may feel they will never measure up.
- What students really need at a deeper level is just he approval of a loving adult who they can trust for honest feedback.