



School Culture: Full Lesson Tour in Community, Virtue, & Education with Robyn Burlew

Lesson 6: Meaningful and Effective Classrooms

Outline:

Space

- Strive to make the classroom a home for the students.
- Make it a place of beauty and comfort – not sterility.
- When you greet your students be hospitable and help them to become residents of the classroom.
- Lead into consistent routines/liturgies that set the tone for the class.
- Start off with a consistent practice upon the start of class like a warm-up writing exercise, catechism, song, or prayer.

Time

- Have smooth transitions during which expectations are clearly set out for the students.
- Give instructions ahead of time.
- Establish that you are the one who decides when students move to the next thing.
- Make sure there is a consistent process for things like turning in papers, going to the restroom, getting a drink, etc.
- Have a smooth flow between teacher lead and student lead/group activities.
- For group work, plan out purposeful student combinations for best work.
- The teacher is the one who ends class (not the bell or a student getting up to go)
- Keep track of time so you can end class meaningfully with an ending liturgy or benediction.

Behavior

- Classroom Management is very important.
- “Management” does not mean the low bar of merely trying to avoid crisis. It is an active process of shaping, superintending, and stewarding.



Shaping:

- Peacetime Instruction – When the classroom is at peace, lay out meaningful expectations that you will uphold and lay out situations that the students will face including temptations the responses to those temptations.
- Establish practices and routines that form the students to a desirable classroom culture.
- Ensure that your manner is appropriate but also playful, warm, and joyful.
- Be predictable. Have a consistent personality and have consistent rules. (This does not mean to avoid spontaneity.)

Superintending:

- Know what is happening under the surface of your classroom.
- Observe the “silent chatter” of the students.
- You do not need to address everything, but be aware of what is going on and be sure the students know you know what is going on.
- Even during instruction you can nonverbally address a behavioral issue. This is a way to consistently uphold expectations.

Stewarding:

- When you can no longer superintend an issue, you must steward it.
- You must discern to see what sort of response to give.
- Be in control and address the issue calmly.
- You must decide whether the issue is best solved publicly or privately.
- Also, you must decide if mercy or punishment would be best. Be sure it is “mercy with a purpose” if you choose mercy.
- Consider school policies with regards to discipline.
- Decide if you need outside help with disciplinary action.
- You ought to seek help if the issue will take more than five minutes of class time or if you yourself are angry or defensive.
- If you stick to the expectations you set out, the students will conform in time and you will have less issues.