

# MODEL LEARNING ANALYSIS JOURNAL

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Experiences (these events took place approximately April 19-21, 1995)

"Well, Susan," Donna my cooperating teacher began, "My sixth hour class made the other student teacher cry."

I looked at her, horrified that I should have to face such students and greet them enthusiastically with a discussion surrounding Shakespeare, Romeo, Juliet and English. "Well," I said, "I always did love a challenge." She smiled and said they would challenge.

From my first moment in the classroom, the sixth hour students did present a challenge to me. They talked consistently about school, boys, girls, dates, how stupid Shakespeare was, what happened last night-you name it they talked about it. When I was able to begin a lecture, I would be interrupted several times with requests for bathroom passes. I began to get frustrated. I would politely ask for silence so we could begin class and they would continue. I would get more frustrated. They would get up from their seats and move to sit with other friends. I began to understand why the other student teacher cried. Finally, I stood at the front of the classroom and waited for ten minutes to get their attention. I knew that I did not have control of the classroom, that these students would not learn any Shakespeare from me, and further that I wasn't sure that I wanted to be there. I began to issue threats of detention and removal from class. I received no significant changes in behavior, nor any increase attention from the students.

I explained my frustration to my cooperating teacher and asked for her advice. She thought video taping the students and then calling parents to come in and view student misbehavior might work the best. "I've tried everything else," she said, "this might be our last chance to get their attention."

I thought about this method and began to think that this type of coercion could only serve to increase the "me vs. them" attitude that had become commonplace in this classroom (as was discussed in the Glasser book we have been reading, *The Quality School*, ch. 3). Using this information, I attempted to help the students take responsibility for their actions and initiated what we discussed as a "Glasser meeting" (as discussed in class 4/3/95).

## Processing

When I came into the classroom on Friday, I was greeted with the same chaos. Instead of taking ten minutes to get the class in order, I used my body language to indicate to them that today would be different. The students grunted, groaned and began to talk. I told them that Mrs. Bolt (my cooperating teacher) had suggested video taping them and calling parents. That did get their attention. I then told them that I was against the idea and I wanted to know if we could solve our problem in another manner. They accepted my offer.

I told them that they had to define the problem in our classroom, propose solutions for our classroom and finally, the groups had to decide on a solution. At first, the groups (two groups of 15 students that I arranged) spent a considerable amount of time bashing my teaching methods.

Then, suddenly one student said that maybe they could stop talking so much and Ms. Johnson wouldn't have to threaten us with detention. Eureka! They were beginning to take ownership of the problem and they would begin to find solutions.

### Generalizing

Once my students began to take ownership of the behavior problems I knew that we were starting to work on a solution already. The students formed a list of behavior problems, everything from talking to asking for passes in the middle of discussion. The list also included requesting and offering more respect for one another. The procedure, my interpretation of a Glasser meeting, was easier to implement than I would have predicted. I was impressed! Punishments were on the list as well. Students requested only one warning and then removal from class. Students also requested that we return to a system that has them raising hands and speaking only one at a time. I began to understand that they did not like the chaos any more than I did, only they were as powerless to solve the problem as I was. We both needed to examine the problem in order to solve it. By placing the responsibility on them, instead of on me as in my previous interventions, my students had to be accountable for their behavior and their learning (which is, of course, what Glasser predicts!).

### Practical Application

Involving the students in the Glasser meeting is one of the successes of my students teaching. I am learning the lead-management style of teaching (Glasser, pp. 31). The students are learning more, they are happier in coming to class, and I am happier teaching sixth hour. Our expectations are very clear to one another; each class I begin with our classroom rules, and each class ends with a question, "how did we do today?" Students have taken ownership of their behavior, and I am facilitating not only Shakespeare, but also the maturity of my ninth grade students.