

## Looking Ahead Through Reflecting

As I spend time in the classroom as a teacher, I find myself constantly reminiscing on my days as a student. I can remember taking mental notes of my school experiences, both good and bad. I had so much fun when I was allowed to work with my classmates in a structured setting, and I hated being called on when I didn't know the answer to a question. As I look back, I realize that through my personal learning experience I have formulated my own ideas of how best to run a healthy learning environment.

On a basic level, every child should have the same learning opportunities as the next. In a perfect world, every student would have these same opportunities at home. The harsh reality, however, is that many students come to school hungry, tired, and have many additional issues they are dealing with. It is our responsibility as teachers to not dismiss the problem, but to address it and ensure that the child feels safe. It is unrealistic to expect children to leave their problems at the door, because anyone who has ever worked with children knows that these same problems affect the learning process.

Classroom management is an aspect of teaching that I am constantly tweaking and focused on. In my classroom, I sit down with the students at the beginning of the year and together we create a list of class expectations. In addition, a set of consequences will be listed for failure to meet the expectations. This way, the students aid in the creation of their learning environment and take ownership of their learning experience. I also am a very organized person and this skill is important to my teaching. In my experience, structured learning is often lost when students have to dig through piles of papers for an assignment or reflection activity. With an organized learning space, the classroom runs more efficiently for the students and educator.

Teaching is a life-long process in which educators must constantly reflect on their own practices to improve and perfect their craft. A model teacher is a team player and one who is confident, yet willing to change to better the students' learning experience. My classroom atmosphere would be stimulating and safe so that students feel comfortable taking intellectual risks. In addition the respect I show my students is the respect I will receive in return. Teachers should be child-centered, and I vow to connect with every student on a personal level. Finally, all classroom activities must be engaging and authentic. Differentiated instruction will be used for all students as I incorporate a wide variety of kinesthetic, hands-on, and technology based activities. I will always strive to express my dedication to teaching, and convey my passion for learning to my students.