

Lesson 3 – Classical and Operant Conditioning

#7 I wonder at what point a person thinks about internal feedback. At what point should a teacher stop giving feedback? (p. 279-280)

Rebecca,

I think that this is a very powerful question that comes up in my school quite frequently. I think that this also tied directly to motivational issues. Unfortunately, having been a perfectionist, internal feedback was not always positive or even constructive. Allowing a student, such as myself, to continuously beat up upon themselves can be very detrimental to a child. Therefore, it is very important for students who can not self-regulate this type of intrinsic behavior to receive feedback from the adults around them who may have more knowledge given a particular topic.

Megan

I wonder if it is nearly impossible to wean students off a token economy system effectively. Mayer 252

David,

While it is not quite a token economy system, I reward students for "ah-ha" moments in the math classroom with a pencil to place in the ceiling tile. This encourages students to actively participate in class. I suddenly find myself being overwhelmed with volunteers trying to take math to the next level or merely answer a question correctly. I begin by being relatively lax about how a student gets the pencil. As I begin to tighten the reins I find that the students who are not extrinsically motivated remain answering questions. When I ran out of pencils students stopped being so eager to participate. When it took me a while to get new pencils to hand out students became restless about the pencils in the ceiling and began pulling them out, showing great disrespect for the achievements of their classmates. I wonder if by weaning students off of the reward they begin to see it as a punishment instead?

Megan

Lesson 4 - Cognitive Psychology in the Classroom

Patrick,

I can always count on reading your work with a sports theme in mind. I often go into your readings trying to see if I can create my own approach to tying the topic to baseball and see if you took the same series of steps. What I really enjoyed about your essay is the correlation between practice and work-outs and game-time performance. I think that there is definitely a connection there along with innate ability. This would be a great thing to bring to the first day of practice to emphasize the important of work ethic and giving your all at practice, not just physically but also mentally. Nicely done!

Megan

Hannah,

I really enjoyed the point you brought up about a basketball player being aware of where they are on the court to shoot a free throw, or a three-point shot. I was amazed by how concentrated on other players a pointguard can be and still realize when he crosses the mid-court line for timing purposes and may back up but not beyond the line without ever looking down. I brought up some similar issues with regards to playing tennis. I think that it is funny that these aspects of sports are so important yet it becomes second nature to the athlete. I cannot recall the last time that I played softball and wasn't aware of the foul line or when the outfield fence was coming up. In warm-ups I have come to be able to close my eyes and pitch a strike because I am aware of where homeplate is.

Megan

Lesson 5 - Some Psychology of Reading

#1 I wonder why they don't tell you the correct way to pronounce those words and wonder if I am just being lazy by not grabbing a dictionary.

Patrick,

Furthermore, I wonder why if there is one pronunciation in the dictionary for a word, different part of the same country pronounce it in different ways. I grew up in the midwest yet I say some words differently from people near the Illinois/Iowa border, or from Kansas City.

Megan

7. Does an inability to make inferences correlate directly with poor performance on standardized tests?

I thought about standardized test quite frequently while reading these chapters. Not only did I think about the inference part, but also with relation to personal experiences. Are test truly testing an ability to read and comprehend what was read if topic of inference and personal connections weigh in with reading comprehension. Are tests not then biased by placing a story about a fishing expedition between a father and a son against females or students who do not have a father? Or should students be able to see beyond the story as a fishing expedition to a bonding moment between two people? At this point I circle back to the inference statement that you posed. Further, if these are expectations placed upon test takers, what are the questions truly driving towards and even further, what role does placing a time limit upon the test play?

Melissa,

I can see and understand your concern with regards to foreign language, as I am glad that I had vocab lists in my German classes, however I think of it a bit differently in your native language. I don't recall any of my vocab lists having words that correlated with each other growing up. For some reason we would have words like elephant and courageous in the same list. My teachers used to make up sentences for the words, and our workbook had random sentences rather than being able to connect the words in context. I recall being told to try and link the words but all we ever created were nonsense stories which made little to no sense. I think that if I could have created a realistic story it may have helped me to make connections between real life and the meaning of the word.

Megan

Responses to Peers

Melissa,

I thought it was great to see you try to utilize the same things that the text talks about native speakers to second languages. I wonder how much of a student's struggles can be solved by using the same strategies of phonics as opposed to simply trying to get a student to think of the second language as a new form of communication rather than continuously reverting it to english and being quite so literal.

While I teach math I worked with a student last year reading To Kill a Mocking Bird. I never liked reading growing up, and frankly am still not that fond of it unless I am reading about design or psychology. The students and I got along really well and I look after her like a sibling still. We worked together to get through the book and her comprehension was terribly low until we brought the book to life and compared it to real life. As her comprehension grew and she compared the text to her social circle her like for reading also grew. If you ask her about the book today, one year later, she can still recall details and tell you all about the story and how situations have played out in real life. It has enhanced her memory of historical facts and her ability to create parallels. While she isn't itching to pick up just any book she asks me what books to read or to help her find the parallels in current reading assignments. Strangely, I find myself now reading all of the books I skipped out on and faked my way through in high school.

Lesson 6 - Some Psychology of Writing

Patrick,

I really enjoyed your thoughts about ELL students. When I taught in Phoenix we had our fair share of ELL students covering 117 different languages at our middle school alone. I really enjoyed learning about some of the alternative educational opportunities available for native Spanish speakers. In one option students could learn the curriculum in the morning completely in Spanish and learn the exact same thing in the afternoon in English. This way students were receiving a double dose of the content but in becoming more familiar with the content could also begin learning English in a safe environment. I could imagine this going miles for a student's ability to read and write in English.

Megan

James,

I really enjoyed reading about your perspective of writing in the math curriculum. I too teach math, and although I teach Geometry, an ideal place to incorporate writing, I often struggle with getting students to see the justification for writing in math. Furthermore, just as students hate learning vocab in English, it is like pulling teeth to get a student to make index flash cards of important math terms and holding vocab quizzes. Perhaps I should restructure this aspect to incorporate writing but less in the fashion of a true English classroom.

Megan

Lesson 7 – Some Psychology of Learning Science and Dealing with Misconceptions

Hannah,

I really enjoyed how you opened your paper. I think that most teachers are teaching a subject that they allowed to engulf them in high school and college. I know that I still find myself standing in the shower completely glazed over pondering great mathematical wonderments. Most of my friends have to bring me back to reality or tell me to tone down my nerdiness and my students are no exception to this rule. However, I think that the humbling process of thinking about misconceptions can do nothing but improve our ability to teach our content. I sometimes find myself asking why a student doesn't get a topic when it seems so easy to me. Most of the time when I ask the students about this it is because of some minor misconception, like when to flip an inequality, which can throw an entire problem off of course. With misconceptions in mind, we can teach to them in an effort of preventative measure.

Megan

David,

You are incredibly brave to look for misconceptions in math. I am lucky enough to also teach web design and therefore avoided the math discussion on this topic. Math is a place of great confusion for many students and I think that you hit the root of it on the head, understanding numeracy. You pointed out that a student should be able to visualize that -11 is to the left of 3 on the number line and is therefore less than 3 . I often find that while students can throw around the term negative there is actually very little understanding of what a negative number truly is. After all, it isn't something that they can count on their fingers and toes. :-)

Megan

Lesson 8 – Some Psychology of Learning Math and Teaching Problem Solving

Elizabeth,

As a math teacher I often find myself at Purple Math. I find myself looking for creative new ways to teach something, a true building approach to math and even as, dare I admit, a refresher for some topics. I often find myself being overwhelmed by the sheer amount of content available on this site.

I really enjoyed that you brought up that there was a lack of practice problems and quizzes. I think that this is a key component missing from many math websites. I find it funny that this is the case given that this is a content area that truly presses for continual practice, often forgetting about the quality versus quantity debate.

Nice analysis.

Megan

Erik,

I really enjoyed your perspective of this site given that you are not a math teacher. More importantly, I am a math teacher and I never knew that this resource was out there.

Often times website lack word problem practice, which is something that students need great help with. Everything in our readings said that using word problems to create an experience combined with the math problem enhances deeper learning. I really like the graphical representation in the geometry section of this site as well. It really brings to life what is drawn in 2D form on the chalkboard.

Megan

Lesson 9 – Motivation and Cognitive Apprenticeship

#2 On pages 436–37, the idea of school math versus street math is discussed and makes them seem like two completely different things. I wonder how related they actually are because I believe those who are notably good at street math would be good at school math with consistent instruction.

Andrea,

After looking through several posts I think that this is a question that almost everyone commented on. I think that it is funny that the example is about multiplication and how the street person breaks it down into groups of addition. The reason that I find this to be comical is because this is how we are all taught to learn to multiply. We are taught that $2*3$ is the same thing as adding together three groups of two. Therefore $2*3 = 2+2+2 = 4+2 = 6$. Equality merely implies that regardless of how different each of these statements is, they are all expressing the same thing. Therefore, didn't the street vendor merely use the discovery model for multiplication as is taught to third grade students across the nation?

Megan

#13 I wonder if my students rate other students in the class as less able or less hard working when I give them assistance that wasn't asked for. (478)

Ashley,

I think that the answer to this question lies in how often this take place. If it is a fairly common thing then students see it as a part of how you run your classroom. If you only do this to a few students or only on occasion then it may be perceived as more of a picking on a student issue.

Megan

Lesson 11 – Assertive Discipline and Punishment

Patrick,

I think that it is often difficult to bring into the classroom techniques that are generalized and formatted to be changed for individual cases, as you have pointed out. I find that there are many similarities as a result to the discipline approach at our school. "We", and I use the term loosely, operate on one system for the entire staff, including verbatim phrases that we are suppose to use to help a student reflect upon their actions. I think that what I find most difficult about all of this is that if a distraction has already interrupted your classroom, it is not always beneficial to continue the disruption by discussing the issue with the student in class. However, if you do not address the issue up front then the teachable moment may pass. I think that this is why classroom management is the most difficult aspect for most teachers to get the hang of.

Megan

Kelly,

I couldn't agree more with you and Melissa. As of lately our administration has sat back in amazement at meetings at the lack of control that they have. With all of the transitions taking place, our staff has become a non functioning group that is rapidly growing out of control. As a group of educators you would think that we would be able to step back and say, "I wouldn't allow one student in my class to treat another with such behavior and I certainly woudln't let them walk all over me." ...But we don't. I wonder if we have just become desensitized with regard to this topic due to the behaviors that we see taking place in our classrooms.

Megan

Lesson 13 – Glasser and Control Theory

James,

I completely understand your perspective about the Algebra curriculum being packed too full for teachers to teach effectively. Ultimately, this is the first time that students are truly asked to look at math from a truly abstract perspective, given that they don't really understand that x is merely a place holder, and suddenly they are solving for this mysterious x value. To further this point, do students understand what the solutions actually mean in Algebra. I rarely see a student plug the solution back and to check the answer and when I ask why $x=7$ I merely get a series of statements describing how to solve the problem or a dumbfounded look and shrug of the shoulders.

Across the district we didn't even get to quadratics this year, yet we set our goal high and intend to get there next year. I think that we all must be blind!

Megan

Hannah,

In making the transition to a middle school we have begun the concept of teaming. Within the 8th grade team, just as the other two teams, we were given the task of creating rules for students to follow as a team. The other two teams in the school began to list multiple rules down to how a paper is headlined, what kind of pencil and color of pen, type of paper... essentially micromanaging each little detail, which the 8th grade team neglected to find the value in. I really enjoyed your classroom rules. There were brief, to the point and allowed for little wiggle room. I think that when teachers have a list a mile long students become overwhelmed and begin to disobey them as a result. I particularly enjoyed that your rules were fairly common classroom expectations and general school principles from across the nation.

Megan

Lesson 14 – Rogers and T.E.T. Models

#8 According to Rogers, people are basically good and their feelings are important. Without being a trained psychologist, how do I see the good in a student who writes racial slurs in their book without any regard to others or who acts out? I know the student is almost trained to act this way, but how do I get the student to see their own good?

Brendan,

Someone else replied that you need to catch them doing something right. This recently came up at our school due to the 8th grade awards night. Some students received awards who have multiple referrals and are otherwise jerks to everyone in the school including the administration. I gave an award to one such student who has even received OSS this year. I have this student twice a day every days, which means three different classes out of a total of 9 for the student. I often cannot believe what I hear about him in the halls and while in the staff lounge. He is a completely difference person in my classroom. Sometimes it takes going out of your way to make sure that you can make a connection with a kid. The irony involved here is that we often discuss how and why he has misbehaved elsewhere. There is good in everyone and often time the facade that you see is merely a front the put up to be a part of a group of students, doing the same thing, that they envy.

Megan

#4 I wonder if teachers who are always attending workshops or graduate classes would be a better empathetic listener for their learners? (3)

Susan,

I used to be one of those teachers who was missing for this committee and that workshop and these training and everything else. I found that when I would return to the classroom I was overwhelmed with complaints and questions, given that there are no true math subs in our district, that I began shutting people out. I was in sensory overload and while what my kids really wanted was for me to listen, it ate into time that needed to be spent covering content that was either not taught or taught incorrectly. I think that being out of the classroom has great implications for your teaching in the long run but can be very detrimental in the short term.

Megan