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How does the use of personal relationships with students affect my teaching practice?

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Abstract:

Researchers have found that positive student-teacher relationships lead to a more effective teaching practice. In order to investigate this theory, I conducted an investigation in the second grade classroom in which I student taught at Reed Elementary School is classified as a Title I school where all of the students qualify for free meals. The school is culturally diverse and has limited resources. I investigated the question of whether student-teacher relationships impact my teaching practice. I used reflective work and charts to conduct my study. I found that positive student-teacher relationships positively impact one's teaching practices, if and only if every student is treated equally. Some limitations of this study is the length due to COVID-19, biases, and the depth of data collected.

Introduction/ Context:

I student taught in a second grade classroom at Reed Elementary School in rural Pennsylvania with Mrs. Anderson. Reed Elementary School is a low-income school district where all students qualify for free meals. Most students only learn in the classroom and their families are unable to help with homework at home. Unfortunately, their support systems are not sufficient enough for their learning (due to the financial battles they face). Thus, it was important to me to try to make the biggest impact on each and every student in some way or another. In order to make the biggest impact on my students, I decided to investigate the following question: How does the use of personal relationships with students affect/ impact my teaching practice? In other words, do I teach differently if I have a bad relationship with my students? Do I treat students who I have a positive relationship with better?

Method/Data Analysis:

1. Developmental portfolio
 - a. Weekly charts of student progress
2. Personal history:
 - a. Weekly reflections
3. Living education theory:
 - a. Reflection of own teaching videos

Findings:

1. Positive student-teacher relationships lead to more success in a teacher's teaching practice.
2. Teachers must build rapport with their students in order to foster a positive student-teacher relationship.
3. Positive student-teacher relationships will only positively affect a teacher's teaching practice if each and every student is treated equally, while still accommodating student needs.

Conclusions:

I found that fostering a positive relationship with my students made my teaching practice far more effective. Ultimately, it fostered academic growth, increased students' sense of belonging in school, increased cooperative participation in classroom activities, and minimized behavioral and learning issues. I recognized the importance of equal treatment among all students. Overall, although some students will need to be accommodated in their learning and treatment, each student should have an equal and fair opportunity to interact and create a positive relationship with their teacher.

Limitations:

- Length of study due to COVID-19
- Biases
- Depth of data collected

Discussions/ Implications for Practice:

I recognized the importance of reflection, recognizing your biases, and building a positive relationship with students. Other educators can learn from my efforts by recognizing the extreme importance in knowing your biases, learning from them, and making yourself a better teacher from them. It is so important that educators try their best to avoid letting their biases impact their teaching practices. All in all, this self study has ultimately prepared me to recognize my biases so that I can build positive relationships with all of my students, thus, making my teaching practices more effective.