

Chapter 3

Theme:

Expectations vs Consequences

Single Best Quote:

“Great teachers focus on expectations...least effective teachers focus on the consequences.”

Points:

1. Classroom management sets the stage for student learning.
2. Great teachers make their expectations very clear. Their expectations are clearly established, but the consequences of violating these expectations are secondary...a distant secondary!
3. If consequences become the issue then the student has the opportunity to do a cost-benefit analysis to make a clear well thought out decision to meet or not meet the expectation.
4. The fear of the unknown takes away the student's ability to do a quick low-level cost-benefit analysis. Keep them guessing.
5. The cyclical nature of the school year is beautiful. It allows the teacher to evaluate, reset, recreate themselves and present their class to a new group of students every 12, 24, 36 or 48 months (depending on your building level; mine is every 24 months; we can completely reset the program, the procedure and the personality every 2 years.)

Self-evaluation and application as a:

- **Shop teacher** – I have never clearly identified in my thinking the contrast between expectations and consequences. In fact, I have often condemned myself or judged myself inadequate for NOT being specific on consequences. I know I am negligent for not having a list on the wall of level one, level two, etc. consequences. But, I did not like being distracted by trying to keep score of who was in and who was out, who was good and who was bad, etc. It is a huge distraction for me who is trying to interact and respond to the students. My expectations are very clear. In fact, I spend the first two weeks of the sixth grade nine week quarter going over “shop safety” which includes the “seven shop expectations”. I often refer to this as “crushing the students.” But, once we are through with this period of “introduction” or “crushing” and each student has achieved 100% on the test (and, they have since the 1980's every time in HS and MS), then they begin to experience the freedom of working independently in the shop. I then begin to respond to their need for instruction, guidance and availability of equipment and material. Consequences are never addressed other than with the vague threat of me “talking to them” and a couple early demonstrations in front of the class of someone being “talked to” by the teacher. No one wants to go there, including the teacher, but the results are a refocusing on the expectations and productivity in the shop classroom. So, it appears I'm close to doing what Whitaker suggests in this chapter. I had judged myself as negligent, but effective. Whitaker is throwing around the term “great”? I'll take that label over negligent.
- **Bible teacher** – ministry expectation: I teach the Bible, you listen. I do not entertain, give motivational speeches, get mystical or have prayer lines. I do not “build relationships” or “spend time with the people” or “go get coffee”. I am NOT their pastor, friend or life coach. I teach, you listen. If you want something else, go somewhere else.
- **Parent** – Relationship is so much more an issue than consequences. Expectations mixed with an interactive daily relationship is the key. Consequences are more for protection of the child than for punishment. When consequences were/are used with children/grandchildren they are swift and decisive, but never a threat hanging over the child's head. I want to build relationship, not obedience. Obedience is for dogs. Relationship is for children.

- Person –

Questions/Criticisms/Evaluations/Comments of Whitaker's presentation or perspective:

1. Not mentioned in this article, but true, is the fact the student can always win this power struggle game if they have the understanding, insight and experience. The teacher is limited. Students are not. The power always rests with the student. If you disagree consider how one teacher with a microphone in front an assembly can maintain control. How? The students give it to them. I've seen this go the other direction when the student body decided they were NOT going to give up their power.
2. I laughed out loud at the "thumping" story.
3. I learned a lot about this topic in the 1990's when each year in the high school shop we would build a house for the school and sell it for a family to move in by the end of the year. My first year I behaved like a slave master forcing the kids to engage and finish the project realizing that failure to finish the project would be costly and program ending. The result was a "slave rebellion" that I deserved. This was the only year I gave a class a chance to evaluate me as a teacher. The responses they wrote were vicious and damning, but true. I knew what to expect. This changed my behavior and leadership style with the students. We started the next year sitting on the hoods of our cars and pickups at the job site the first day of school eating doughnuts and drinking Mountain Dew (which I provided, of course). The expectation was we are a team, a construction crew with a project. I didn't talk about being a team, but just interacted with them that way. Sometimes talking about things destroys the natural development of the goal. I demonstrated leadership by working and helping the students with situations bigger than the house project and I successfully recreated a dead program that I had killed over the previous 12 months.