

The Outsourcing of the First Day of School and Classroom Instruction:
The Factual Past Vs. The Current Machine.

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Abstract

The first day of school is the most important day for each individual classroom teacher. Research highlighted by D.M. Brooks (1985) showed the effective steps each classroom teacher should take to decrease disruption and increase academic success. However, in the last decade such research has been ignored and replaced with a business model from outside companies where programs are sold, games are played and teachers influence in the classroom is managed by outside business entities. These companies are now telling teachers how to teach, what to teach and how to manage their classrooms through the use of their own programs. Such programs are also being legislated and forced within local school districts by State governments. The free market within the field of education is both not free, nor absent of state or local control, as such companies and programs seek to control classroom instruction through bypassing K-12 classroom teacher's individuality.

Keywords: K-12 Education, Classroom Instruction, Free Market Education.

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An educator's ability to effectively manage a classroom depends on what occurs on the first day of school. Research on the first day of school was first introduced in the 1980s. Dr. Douglas Brooks, a teacher education professor at the University of Texas at Arlington, researched and discovered that most teachers on the first day of school were simply interested in getting through the day and surviving. As Dr. Brooks stated in his article titled, *The First Day of School*; (1985a), what we now know is that there are critical contexts in which lessons must be delivered and ways in which teachers must communicate with students on the first day of school. These contexts aim to increase engagement and decrease disciplinary action that can impact the rest of the school year. These methods must happen on the first day of school, every single school year.

Dr. Brooks also reported in his research article titled, *The Teacher's Communicative Competence: The First Day of School*; (1985b), that teachers who exhibited positive behaviors through facial expressions, tone of voice, and positive manners are more successful throughout the first day of school, and this led to further success throughout the whole school year. The inexperienced teachers and administrators who rushed through the first day of school, used harsh tones, played games, held assemblies, and failed to teach the rules and behavioral expectations, were more likely to struggle all year long. Teachers who were not as successful on the first day of school tended to struggle with communication and student discipline throughout the entire school year.

An organized sequence of instruction and positively modeling behaviors by effective teachers also increases the chances of a successful first day of school for both the teacher and

students within the classroom (professional businesslike tone of voice, friendly personality, abundant eye contact, smooth organized transitions, and a *teaching* of the rules and classroom expectations). In his article titled, *The First Day of School*, Dr. Douglas Brooks discussed what teachers should both do and not do on the first day of school. He stated how these practices could either help or hurt the teacher and their students, from the first day of school forward. Dr. Brooks reported that student's needs are very simple on the first day of school.

Student needs on the first day of school are the following:

1. Are they in the right room?
2. Where are they supposed to sit?
3. What are the rules of this teacher?
4. What will the students be doing in the course?
5. How will the students be evaluated?
6. Who is the teacher as a person?
7. Is the teacher going to be interested in them as individuals?

Dr. Brooks also stated that teachers who address these student needs first and often, are likely to be more successful than those teachers who ignore the immediate needs of their students, most of which tend to be emotional.

In his article titled, *The First Day of School*; (1985a), Dr. Brooks recommends the following sequence of activities for teachers on this very critical day:

1. Stand at the door and greet each student with a handshake and a smile, and tell them all that they can sit in any student chair they wish to sit in.
2. Call the class to order when the bell rings.

3. Take role, organize seating, and establish a seating chart at the same time.
4. Explain classroom rules and procedures.
5. Introduce the course content and grading procedures
6. Solicit student autobiographical information on three-by-five index cards.
7. Talk about yourself, your school experiences, and so forth.
8. Close with what materials will be needed the next day and what the content will cover.
9. Dismiss the class at the bell.

Most importantly, Dr. Douglas Brooks stated that the *teaching* of the rules is critical for student and teacher success. If the rules and expectations are not taught, using positive and negative examples with described disciplinary action for the latter, the ambiguity of each rule will confuse students, thereby leading to increased rule breaking and classroom disorganization down the line.

Accompanying the first day of school's proven practices, as researched by Dr. Douglas Brooks in the 1980's, I would merely add one more critical strategy that also meets the emotional needs of students; *Tell your students that you care about them*. I recommend using these exact words at the beginning and end of each class period on the first day of school ("*I care about each and every one of you, and here's why*"). When teachers make this statement and specifically address the importance of safety, learning and creating a beneficial environment for everyone, students will be pleasantly surprised to hear this from their teacher. Most teachers may never say these words to their students on the first day of school or any day after that throughout their entire career.

Unfortunately, this proven research has been disregarded and thrown by the wayside. Although this research has existed since the 1980s and has been implemented by Dr. Harry Wong on a national level, many schools have failed to address these simple needs and then later wonder why their schools are experiencing problems with conflict, violence and disciplinary issues between teachers, administrators and students—along with lowered academic success or problems with attendance. On the first day of school, many teachers and administrators across America are now encouraged to play a variety of “get-to-know-you-games” with students or neighboring classrooms. Other schools may have staff members pile students into auditoriums for non-academic related assemblies, thereby increasing the anxiety levels among students through instructional ambiguity.

In today’s K-12 educational world, the outsourcing of school-related activities and classroom instructional methods themselves to education companies that take the place of individualized classroom instruction, are dominating a child’s and teachers time in school while removing individuality, freedom and individualized thought. These outside organizations and companies are expensive, typically costing tens of thousands of dollars for just one school district, and schools districts are buying into them—hook, line and sinker. This is also a way to streamline what every teacher is doing within their classroom, thereby making it easier for an administrator to monitor less, while knowing that every teacher is doing the exact same thing at the exact same time. Unfortunately, the free market of ideas in the field of education are far from free, and it has corrupted and eliminated proven scholarly fact and replaced it with games, gimmicks and expensive programs that schools districts and state governments force on their teachers and students, without notice and without an educator’s consent.

Moreover, the design and implementation of “new” first day of school activities, such as “suspended curriculum,” PBIS (Positive Behaviors, Interventions and Supports) and the companies that push them, have taken the place of proven scholarly fact and objective approaches to school success. “Suspended curriculum,” for example, is designed to have students play games and socialize at school for approximately one to two weeks (sometimes an entire month), every day, before they begin formally learning within their classrooms. Such activities lack scholarly evidence to substantiate their implementation and “suspended curriculum” has been shown to contradict proven fact of what should happen on the first day of school, as mentioned above. Therefore, by not having students spend the whole first day of school in each of their individual classrooms, with their teachers describing what is expected throughout the year, such programs are failing to meet the immediate emotional and academic needs of their students.

The free market with regard to the field of K-12 education is far from free and it has muddied the waters of educator individuality and proven fact, while inviting in outsiders (snake-oil salesman) to sell their wares, all with State and local government backing. In the end, it’s professionalism and honesty in a classroom setting on the first day of school, and the days that follow, that build authentic influence with students—as this level of professionalism, stemming from the teachers themselves, will always be the best classroom manager and predictor of future academic success.

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