



PROGRAM:

School Improvement Innovation Summit 2014

Rick Smith

Transcript

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RICK SMITH

My name is Rick Smith. I'm the author of the book and my co-author Grace Dearborn have authored this LumiBook. It's the second edition I wrote called *Conscious Classroom Management*. And it just came out through the School Improvement Network just a few months ago. So it takes what I wrote initially and adds more material and adds the video and the connectivity that's so valuable.

RICK SMITH

So I'm just gonna share a few things with you. First, I want you to know that I did not do this alone. I do have a colleague and her name is Grace Dearborn. And she does what I do and she is the co-author, and she couldn't be here today. I do want to share with you my one goal for this session. I do lots of workshops and keynotes, and I always have only one goal and I'll share with you now. And as I share this goal with you if you like it and if it works for you and your goals for this session then your job is to break into spontaneous wild applause and maybe throw some "woo hoo's" in. Okay, are you ready?

RICK SMITH

Here's my goal, "stuff you can use!"

AUDIENCE

Woo hoo!

RICK SMITH

Oh good, and we're going to start right away with something very specific that is not about classroom management. And you'll notice that I'm very practical minded. Now, I'm the only one of the keynotes so

far who's wearing his badge or her badge, and the reason is I wanted to model something for you. I don't know if you had this experience at lunch, but you sat down to someone you didn't know and they started talking to you and their eyes started drifting down to you nametag, which is at your crotch level. Right?

RICK SMITH

So what I do, show and tell, okay we've got this little knot in the thing so don't do it yet. We're gonna do this all as a team. So, if you make the knot too big you're not going to be able to put the thing on 'cause you'll strangle yourself. So the tiniest knot you can. So when I say the word "go" your option is to change that knot, but also to turn to a neighbor and say, "Hi" and have a nice deep breath, and take a minute total. Ready and go. So you can have a conversation, say hello, share some highlights.

RICK SMITH

Here it is. And welcome back. I'm gonna focus on some practical stuff that I share with teachers and, um, first I want to just mention that, kind of, there's this kind of invisible quality to effective classroom management. For example, if you're my students and I say this to you what would you do, "Um, class could you open your books to page 27?" What's gonna happen? Maybe two overachievers in the front row will open their books to page 27, but everyone else we have no idea, right? But something like this may have more value, "Okay class, let's open our books to page 27."

RICK SMITH

You're much more likely to get those books open. Same phrase, very different response.

There's that invisible quality that teachers know, but they don't know how to exercise that muscle, and I just defined that as a continuum. On one side is what I call our level of there it is, inner apology and on the other side is our level of inner authority. Not in mean sense of authority, but in the sense that we are authors of what happens in a classroom and we have some responsibility and say so in what happens and we know those teachers. We can see them.

RICK SMITH

If you're a site administrator and a new teacher comes to your site you can tell in the first thirty seconds sometimes where they are on that continuum, but you know it's not that they're there permanently. It's there in the moment that they talk to you 'cause it changes all the time. So how do we move in this direction? And so, that's the question that I'm going to try and answer in the next 18 minutes. Okay, first of all I want to share with you a foundational piece that I share in all my workshops and in the LumiBook as well.

RICK SMITH

I'm gonna flash a picture of a student and if you can relate to this student, if somehow she reminds you of a student that you've had or some of your teacher's had just give a big "woo hoo" when you see this student's face. Yeah, okay. What do we do with this student? This is the typical classroom management situation. Right? Well these are, I'm gonna share with you a couple of assumptions that are happening with this student. First of all, we have to understand that the nose she's making, the tantrum that she's throwing is part of her growth.

RICK SMITH

She is pushing the envelope to find out where the edges are, what the boundaries are. And so, that's not a problem, and yet she's mostly narrating out loud the noise in her head. What she thinks she wants. Our jobs as teachers is to primarily focus on what students need. So what we want, what they want is in their head, what they need is in their heart. That's how I navigate the architecture of the body. So we focus on, and respond to the invisible request.

RICK SMITH

What she's not saying underneath the surface, which I thought she used to say when I was a new teacher, was how, "What can I do now to destroy your career?" Instead what she's actually saying, "What can I do now to behave better? What can I do right now to behave better?" And when we make that assumption everything changes in the classroom. We are on the same team working together, and everything changes when I make that assumption. For example, if I'm teaching, and a lot of teachers have the experience they look at their curriculum by the second day of the beginning of the school year, and by day two they feel like they're six weeks behind.

RICK SMITH

And so how do we move along and I gotta plow through the content, but if I assume that I'm here to teach behavior, which is what this student is asking then everything changes. So if I'm teaching, say the California Gold Rush, I've got a student in the back named Johnny who is acting out, if I think I'm only teaching content I'll go so quick through the behavior stuff he probably won't get it. Something like this, "Class in 1848 gold was discovered, Johnny,

gold was discovered.” He’s like, “Whatever,” and he keeps on acting out, but if I assume I’m here to teach behavior I’ll take an extra heartbeat or two to focus on his behavior and everything gets different.

RICK SMITH

So it might be more like this, “Class in 1848 gold was discovered. Johnny can you please put that away nice? Thank you. As I was saying, gold...” So we just take that extra moment to teach the behavior. Now, over the years as I’ve internalized these assumptions three things shift when I discipline a student from across the room. Now ideally I’d walk up to Johnny and we’d have a whispered conversation, but it’s not always possible. So from across the room three things shift and this is a definite strategy I share with teachers. One, my voice goes down in volume. Two, my voice goes down in tone. And three, my posture gets square to the student. So volume, tone, and posture all shift when I shift.

RICK SMITH

From content to behavior and back again. If you go to the ocean and you want to get passed the waves, you think, “Today I’m just gonna run passed the waves?” What’s gonna happen? You’ll get slammed down every time. The gentlest, most efficient way passed the waves is to go underneath them. It’s the same with the waves of student resistance. We go down and under those waves, deescalating tension. And all arises, these practical strategies, arise by assuming the best of our kids. That we are here to teach behavior, they are here to learn behavior, they want to. There is an invisible contract that you can almost see the ways that we’re in this dance together. And when we soften they soften. Everything changes.

RICK SMITH

Now of course when we make these assumptions, and these assumptions are challenged like every 7 to 10 seconds, right? So here's a cartoon that kind of summarizes these challenges. We have our teacher, Mr. Fogurty getting his picture taken. He says to his student, "Okay, Knute, I'm ready. Shoot the picture." "You don't look natural Mr. F." "Yes I do. This is as natural as I get. Shoot the picture." "You just don't look..." "Shoot the picture!" "Now there's natural." Yeah, some of you are thinking of teachers at your site, I understand. I want to share with you one more piece about assuming the best that I have discovered that is profound, which is that students, I'm sorry teachers can often feel very frustrated.

RICK SMITH

And when they speak to their students out of frustration, that frustration is in their voice and it escalates tension. So the way you take frustration out of your voice when you're angry or frustrated is you just consciously soften the muscles around your eyes, particularly this muscle between the eyebrows. It is physiologically impossible to have soft eyes and have anger or frustration in your voice. Let me model for you the opposite of soft eyes. The curl, the furled brow, the mumble, like that, or the beady eyes. Soft eyes, is you can look at me and your attention, you're eyes are looking at me, but bring your attention to the very periphery of your view and then consciously soften your eyes.

RICK SMITH

In a longer workshop I'd have you turn to your partner and say "You put that away and have a seat". And try that with your soft eyes and it's like, "Would you mind perhaps putting that away". So you can try

this at home and it really is it's just a magic thing. So I call this soft eyes, soft voice. Very practical stuff that I'm trying to share in the 20 minutes that I have. Um, this next one is my favorite strategy of all. And it's a classic...you've heard a theme all morning and all afternoon about connecting with kids. And it's so powerful. This strategy is about that and it's very specific and it's research-based. I call it the 2x10 strategy for classroom management.

RICK SMITH

And it goes like this, what I tell the teachers is pick the student in your class or classes who drives you the most nuts. All right, so you decide which one, okay, and then what do you do with this student is for two minutes a day for 10 days in a row have a personal conversation with this student about anything that this student is interested in as long as this conversation is rated G. The man who did the research, Raymond Wlodkowski, suggests that there is an 85% improvement in classroom management for this one student plus everyone else does better. It is extraordinarily powerful. And I look at it like this, kids walk into the classroom with a constantly cramping muscle as represented by my hand.

RICK SMITH

And the muscle says I want a positive personal connection with an adult authority figure, namely my teacher. This need for connection for many students is more primary than content so they will act out as a signal to us, "Teacher can you please teach me, could you please connect with me? Cause I'd like to learn now." We connect with them over time, the muscle uncramps, relaxes, now they can focus on learning. So it's a very specific strategy that

pays huge dividends. Now secondary teachers often say look 30, uh 2 minutes a day is a long time. And it is when you have 180 students a day. Better I suggest if necessary, is to do 30 seconds a day 10 days in a row then one long conversation. It's the ongoing nature of the connection that seems to make the difference.

RICK SMITH

Now if the student brings up something that I don't know about. They start a conversation and they want to talk about basket weaving I know nothing about basket weaving. That's okay cause I have a very close friend named Google who I can work with and I will learn about basket weaving enough to get that conversation going. So that's the 2x10. And one thing, it's not research-based but I bet the 2x10 also works with adults. So if you are a site administrator and you've got a teacher you want to work with, call that teacher in and start talking about basket weaving or anything else and watch the magic happen. Really it's the most, it's the ongoing connection.

RICK SMITH

What the 2x10 does, all of us as teachers have had this experience quite often where a kid is very negative at the beginning of the year, a negative influence and then something changes now the kid is a positive influence throughout. What the 2x10 does is a formally researched way to bring this about as often as possible. And what I tell teachers in my workshops and keynotes, and in the book is always have at least one student you're doing the 2x10 with all the time. It just changes the nature of teaching. And I will say one more thing about that. Raise your hand if you were at the, at college or university you chose at least one

course based on who was teaching it rather than what the course was about?

RICK SMITH

I look around the room, it's almost 100%. Okay. Pardon the analogy, but many soldiers say they do not go to battle for their country, they go to battle, I'll get it, come on, here we go. Cheer me on people.

AUDIENCE

Woo hoo!

RICK SMITH

Woo hoo, they go to battle for the person on their right and the person on their left. So many, you heard the two keynotes, one this afternoon and one this morning about you know, be—connect with us and students will go to bat if there's a connection. You know it makes all the difference in the world. So that's the 2x10 strategy. Now we're gonna shift gears to an area that is the number one way, I believe, to exercise the area of inner authority. And it has to do with teaching procedures. And so one assumption about procedures it, procedures are the railroad tracks and content is the train.

RICK SMITH

We need to lay those tracks down early and often, polish them, maintain them throughout the school year so the train of content has the direction and speed in which it can go. It is always easier to polish and maintain railroad tracks than to fix a derailed train. Think back to when you were a classroom teacher if you aren't right now and raise your hand if you ever had the derailed train experience. Of course, of course. And so we want to minimize those derailments by polishing and maintaining those railroad tracks as often as possible.

And so I'm gonna share with you a very specific series of strategies that are non-verbal. That I chose because I think they really hit the ground in terms of the practical stuff.

RICK SMITH

Um, the implementation piece that Chet was talking about earlier today. How we do that and here is an example of this. I'm going to focus on rubrics and visuals. Many teachers use rubrics for content. Very few use rubrics for procedures. So I'm going to share with you probably three of these. And the first one is lining up, mostly elementary school. How you can use rubrics. Have the kids form five different lines. Number them 1 through 5. 1 is a poor line, 5 is a perfect line. They need a 5 to start walking. Now the kids have a common language and they'll start to self-correct. "Come on guys, we look like a 3, let's go."

RICK SMITH

That alone will increase the efficiency of the line. But if you take photographs of the kids in their 5 lines, put them over the door, number them 1 through 5, then the magic really happens. I'm your, you're my students, I'm your teacher. I'm standing in the doorway, you want out. I look at you, I hold up three fingers and I wait. I can help you out. So simple. So I'm gonna show you an example of this. It doesn't have to be 1 through 5 it can be 1 through 4, 1 through 3. Here's an example of a rubric for lining up a 1 through 3. When I first started teaching if I could get a number 1 it was a miracle. Now I'm getting emails from teachers across, around the world telling me this has increased the efficiency and the fun of lining up like nobody's business.

RICK SMITH

Now one particular staff at an elementary school a couple of years at the lunch break they decided to make their own photos of rubrics so they did a 1 through 3 lining up. This is what they came up with. These are staff members. And they made copies of these and put them over every door in the school. Numbers 1 through 3 so they had uniform consistency 1 through 3 rubrics throughout the school. So that's lining up. Let's look at another one. Readiness to learn. For this next one my invitation to you is just to enjoy these kid's faces. If you look up the word "what" in the dictionary you'll see the kid number 1, you'll see his face. Right? For number 3 you'd have to look up the word "whatever". And number 5 "joy". And the teacher, the kids they do this and they rotate through.

RICK SMITH

So by the end of the year every kid is in every number at least once. So it's a really magical motivator for the kids. Okay I'll give you one more. Let's look at dismissal formation. A lot of teachers say this to the kids, something like this to the kids, "I'm not dismissing the class until the desks are clean, lined up, organized, and everyone is seated". Well kids have different definitions of those words, don't they? A kid's at the tail of his desk touching the chair seat going I'm seated, trying to make the mad dash to the cafeteria or to recess. Well I'm I have a pet peeve about that. I can't stand when a kid puts their packs on until the bell rings. I think it's rude. I don't like it when kids gather in front of the door; I want to teach bell to bell. So I have in my room above the door I have what I call the five dismissal formation photographs. They need a five to leave.

RICK SMITH

So you're my students I'm your teacher. The bell has rung. Remember the teacher, not the bell, dismisses the class. You're looking at me, I look at you I don't say a word, I hold up four fingers, and I wait. You look at my fingers, you look at the photographs, look at each other, "Your pack, take your pack off!" The pack flies off, my four magically switches to a five. I step off to the side and point to the door and kids walk out. It works pretty much every time. And the cool thing about this is the kids will not blame you for the fact that they're not leaving on time, they will blame each other, which kids will do, but get this one, oddly they will blame the photographs. It's those darn photos that we're in modeling. Hmm.

RICK SMITH

Now you don't need to use rubrics, I'll just give you a couple of examples of other images you can use. When kids walk into the classroom, they have a ritual that they've been doing for the last 3,000 years. They say, "What are we gonna do?" And many teachers say what they're going to do and they say it to each kid individually 17 times until they're red in the face. Instead what would happen if kids walked into the classroom and on the screen they see projected this image. Let's go back to the PowerPoint please. Thank you. They see themselves modeling readiness to learn, along with words describing what they need to do. So the teacher doesn't say a word, "What are we gonna do today?" Here she just points to the screen.

RICK SMITH

"Oh okay," that's the first day. The second day they walk in "I know what to do." Third day they don't say it out loud cause they know they aren't supposed to say it. They sit down. It's very, very efficient. Okay

here's a couple more. How about getting ready for labs. As a science teacher set the lab table up the way you want it take a photograph of it, put the photograph on the screen tell the kids you've got 39 seconds to form your teams around the lab tables, ready and go. Now let's say I've got a student named Johnny who doesn't have the goggles on his desk. I could go up to Johnny and say, "Hey Johnny, you've got to have the goggles." "Oh thanks Mr. Smith."

RICK SMITH

The problem is he is relying on me, which we don't want. Instead what I do is I number them and I say, "Hey Johnny, number four," and he goes, "Oh goggles. Thank you." His brain is being trained to rely on the visuals rather than the teacher, and that's what we want. What kids most need with high expectations and assuming the best, what they need is a clear roadmap. And often the breakdown when working with teachers who are struggling, is that the teacher thinks the roadmap is clear, but it's not. They're missing some essential piece. And often it has to do with is assuming that kids know something when actually we teach procedures and behaviors the same way we teach content as step by step by step, break it down, break it down. One more example let's go to the PowerPoint please. If you have a sink in your classroom and you tell the kids to clean the sink you're gonna get a million versions of a clean sink. But if you clean the skink take a photo, laminate it, put it up you're gonna get a clean sink every time, every time.

RICK SMITH

So finishing with that I want to mention, and that's some specific examples, and if you come to the breakout session across the hall lots more examples of visuals, and

sound signals, and hand signals and all sorts of stuff of how to deliver consequences so that we don't escalate tension in the classroom. Bottom line is when we assume the best and deescalate tension and go into that wave, we don't corner kids, we step out and I tell teachers look if you're in a escalation with a kid in the classroom, that kid in his brain is equating losing face with death and he will defend himself to the point of prison rather than lose face and at that point it is the teacher's job as the one who is more mature, to step back.

RICK SMITH

Johnny things are getting a little tense, let's take a break, let's talk about this in a few minutes. It's the teacher's job to step back, not to toss that kid out. When we start using these principles, we can transform school culture. Classroom management is not just about putting out fires it's about changing the culture of the school and the community. Reducing referrals and suspensions. Increasing focus, fun, and productivity. So with that this is the LumiBook. If you want to check out the breakout session please find me across the hall. Thank you very much. We are done.