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### Customer Service in the Classroom

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2020  
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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO  
Greeley, Colorado  
The Graduate School

CUSTOMER SERVICE IN THE CLASSROOM

An Action Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

Teresa Lantz

College of Performing and Visual Arts  
School of Art and Design  
Program of Art Education and Visual Design

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This Action Research Project by: Teresa Lantz

Entitled: *Customer Service in the Classroom*  
has been approved as meeting the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in  
College of Performing and Visual Arts in School of Art and Design, Program of Art  
Education.

Accepted by the Action Research Committee:

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## ABSTRACT

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This study examines how customer service skills are being used within the classroom. I described customer service skills commonly found in the restaurant industry and then compared these skills with classroom management skills. I approached the collections of my data using the qualitative methodology of educational criticism and connoisseurship. The data that I collected were gathered from twelve observations conducted throughout one school district and self-reflection on a previous career in the restaurant industry. The results of these observations found common themes between the two industries that include proactiveness, impressions, relationships, modeling and being professional. This study presents how educating teachers with customer service skills may build better experiences and success for student and teacher within the classroom. The outcomes of this study may benefit future educational professional development topics.

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## PREFACE

At the age of thirteen I began a journey that would stay with me for almost twenty years. I started my first job in restaurant customer service. This glimpse into the service world was as a dishwasher at the local pub in my hometown. I remember being excited but I had no idea that I would spend the next years working in restaurants and bars learning about customer service.

I have worked or held just about every position you can think of within the setting of a restaurant. I have washed dishes, served tables, stocked salad bars, prepped food, cooked, bartended, and bar backed. I catered events, bartended private events, played hostess, bused tables, delivered food, and managed. Through all these positions it was managing that led me to becoming a teacher. At one specific restaurant that I managed, I was responsible for immersing my employees in the culture and language emanating from the owners of the restaurant. I loved teaching the employees. I excelled at it. I had a passion for teaching the history of the restaurant, where the owners were from and the language they spoke. It was the only other thing in my life that I enjoyed as much as creating art. When I made that final decision to change careers and become an art teacher, I had no idea that my past experiences with customer service would aid me greatly in my classroom.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

I believe that customer service is a combination of certain skills. To fully understand what customer service is, in comparison to the classroom, we must first get an image in our minds. Think about your best customer service experience in a restaurant. You may have had good parking. You walked into the restaurant and someone held the door for you and greeted you kindly. They were pleasantly smiling and if there was a reservation they greeted you with your name. There was no wait, your table was ready for you. The hostess spoke sweetly to you while complimenting something or asking a light personal question to make a connection. It made you feel good. When you got to the table it was clean and set up completely with everything that you needed. The server was prepared and came quickly to your table. The server was knowledgeable about your reservation's details and the menu. Plenty of time was given for you to order but not too much time. The server made you feel comfortable there and made a quick connection with you. When the manager stopped to check in the conversation was pleasant. The check came at the right time without awkwardness from the server. There was no hurry to pay and no wait to get the change back. You left the restaurant with a pleasant departure from the hostess and a good feeling about your experience.

Doesn't this sound lovely? But did any point during this experience have to do with food? You may think that as a restaurant manager my sole purpose was to serve people food, but I honestly believe it is so much more than that. I agree with the words of Danny Meyer in the book *Setting the Table* when he (2008) states that:

I'm primarily in the business of serving food. Actually, though, food is secondary to something that matters even more. In the end. What's most meaningful is creating positive, uplifting outcomes for human experiences and human relationships. Business, like life, is all about how you make people feel. It's that simple, and it's that hard. (Meyer, 2008, p.3)

Making a connection is one of the most important factors of customer service.

I would like you to compare that amazing restaurant situation to a great classroom setting. Imagine yourself as a student. You arrived to class on time. You walked up to the door. The teacher was standing there ready to greet you with a smile. You were greeted with your name and gave a small affirmation. It made you feel good. There was no wait to find out what you were doing because the objectives were posted with instructions. When you got to the table it was clean. The supplies were ready. The teacher came in quickly and started. The teacher was knowledgeable about the details of the lesson. Plenty of time to work was given but not too much time so that you got bored. The teacher walked around the room, was pleasant and made a quick connection with you. The end of class came at the right time in the lesson and there was no panic to clean up before the bell rang. The teacher closed the lesson on a positive note, and you left with a good feeling about the experience.

I think that it is important to see both situations as a form of customer service. Clearly in the classroom setting your clientele is different than that of a restaurant, however, as an educator you are still serving someone, and that someone is your students. In the book *Kids These Days: A Game Plan for (Re)Connecting with Those We Teach, Lead & Love*, Jody Carrington states that “people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel” (2019, p.11).

## **Rational**

### **My Why**

My intent for this study is to help define some of these skills. I feel that educating preservice teachers with necessary skills before entering the classroom will help teachers and the educational field as a whole. When I started teaching, I saw that systems in education are similar to those in customer service. When entering the classroom, I found having my past experiences with customer service helped me form strong classroom procedures and management systems. I was able to create relationships that were appropriate and helped guide the growth of my students. I made connections to my past customer experiences. These connections helped me grow into a strong educator. As I stay in the education field, I have seen many professional development programs come through my district and my school. These training opportunities are teaching and educating teachers with a skill set that is prominent in restaurant customer service.

## **Benefits**

If we, as researchers, can hone in on a skill set that will help educators develop customer service, we may be able to help create classroom environments much more conducive to learning and implement them sooner in an educator's career. This is a proactive approach in the education of the students. Teaching the skill set to educators prior to teaching can help stage the classroom for success. Teachers will be able to focus on the content of their teaching instead of a reactive approach to individual situations.

## **Background and Context**

The setting of my research will take place in a rural school district. There are six schools within the district. These include three elementary, two middle and one high school that are a part of the same feeder system. According to the Colorado Department of Education the district had enrolled 1,834 students for the 2019-2020 school year (D.P., personal communication, March 12, 2020). The entire district employs 167 educators that hold a Colorado teaching license (K.T., personal communication, April 3, 2020).

## **Research Questions**

How are customer service skills used in the classroom? How do these skills aid in the success of teachers and students within their classroom? In order to answer these questions, I will define the skills I see through classrooms observations and compare them to specific restaurant skills.

I believe that the best classroom experience is set up with the same ideals as the best service experience. This research explores the idea that customer service skills are being used in the classroom and highlighting them might be beneficial in creating further positive classroom experiences for teacher and student. I will identify and examine the commonalities between classroom management practices and how they compare to themes found in the restaurant. These themes can help determine the types of professional development school districts can use in the future to help develop strong customer service in the classroom.

## **Definition of Terms**

*Customers/Client/Guest:* In this study these terms to describe a patron of a restaurant or of a classroom. These words describe a person that has been invited into an establishment to receive products or services from someone else.

*Customer Service:* This study refers to customer service as the assistance provided by a company or person to those people who buy or use its products or services. I use this term to describe the service that I provided in both restaurant and the educational settings.

*Hospitality:* Hospitality is the foundation of business philosophy. The way an individual feels during a business interaction is most important. Hospitality exists when two people are on the same side. When something happens for you and not to you is when you feel the presence of hospitality (Meyer, 2006).

*Professionalism:* Professionalism is the competence or skill expected of a professional. In this study I will use this term to describe the actions and demeanor of individuals in the workplace. Being professional is something more than doing a job. It is accepting responsibility for your actions and how they translate to the rest of the world. (Bagchi, 2009).

*Professional Development:* This is a term used in education to describe the educational development or training of a professional educator. This can be used to describe specialized training or advance training in a career. (T.S., personal communication, April 16, 2020).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As a manager of a restaurant I had to learn to read different situations and adapt my skills of customer service appropriately based on the context of a specific situation. When dealing with these situations, I needed to keep in mind the customer's viewpoint while trying to maintain the environment of the restaurant. Just like a manager, a principal of the school has the widest range of customers within a school setting because of the number of stakeholders in a school district. Both a manager of a restaurant and a principal of a school need to be quick to respond to situations. According to Lesley Bruinton (2019), from the webinar *Building Trust*, the difference between restaurant customer service and school customer service should be that the schools should always align with the specific school's mission statement.

#### **Proactive vs Responsive**

“Proactive people think on behalf of others. Sometimes it is also about thinking ahead of others. The attitude is then followed up by thoughtful preparation” (Bagchi, p.69, 2009). When dealing with customers in restaurants it is important to be proactive. This translates to resolving issues fast and appropriately. Meyer (2008) provides in his book *Setting the Table*, examples of his approach to hospitality. He shares that sometimes we play offense and sometimes defense, but the goal is wanting to find a way to win and being proactive is one of his approaches. Many times, you can be proactive about your situation and put fires out before they start. If a restaurant kitchen is running behind and reservations are still coming in, as the manager you can bring out free appetizers or drinks and communicate with the tables in advance to ease the anxiety of the wait time for food. Meyer writes that if you acknowledge your mistakes and express your regret to the customer you will be given a chance to earn back their favor. I have had personal experiences with students that are very similar to this. I have found that acknowledging my mistakes with students and expressing my regret has earned a higher level of respect

with those students. In the end gaining a better relationship with them and learning environment for them.

Robert Lucas (2011) in *Please Every Customer*, also shares that in order to keep the customer happy we need to stay up to date with the needs and trends of the customer. This is a proactive approach. As a teacher you apply this to your classroom by keeping up with social issues and student trends. Knowing more about your students before coming in the classroom, you can proactively plan or communicate appropriately with those students before your lesson begins. “The better you know the students you are teaching the better placed you are to help them in their learning (Woollacott, Booth, Cameron, 2013, p.1).

### **First Impressions**

*Capturing Kids Hearts Participant Manual* (Flippen, 2015) for the classroom, describes first impressions. In the first impressions page of his participant manual Flippen states that “you have only 30 seconds to make a first impression” (p.11). This is the most important part of customer service training. You need to be able to connect, affirm and build trust with the customer all within the first impression. When I trained new restaurant employees, first impressions were the first thing they learned. I taught to always greet the customer at the door, make eye contact and smile, turn your body towards the individual that is speaking, make sure that your uniform is neat and groomed and always be an active listener. Flippen's Participant Manual also states that when we meet someone, they will notice “8 cues of confidence; 1. eye contact, 2. smiling, 3. posture, 4. facial expressions, 5. tone, voice, energy 6. grooming, 7. handshake timing, 8. handshake style” (2015, p.17). Each cue is a necessary part of making that connection.

If we as teachers can make a great first impression on our students, we might make a faster connection with these students. Robert Lucas wrote in his book *Please Every Customer* about the benefits of a positive first impression. “From the time you first come into contact with a customer until the time a transaction ends, you are sending messages about yourself and your organization” (2011, p.65). We as teachers can use these first impression skills with our students to make our sell on learning. If we miss the mark on that first impression before students get into our classroom, according to Flippen (2015), it will take “20 additional encounters to undo or change a bad first impression”

(p.11). That could be 20 class periods if we only see that student once a day in class. That is almost a month's worth of lessons that the student is not buying into because of poor customer service in the classroom.

In *Teaching with Poverty in Mind: What Being Poor Does to Kids' Brains and What Schools Can Do About It* (2010) Jensen suggests that the first ten minutes of class time can be the most important relationship building you can do with your students. The example used is about an exemplary teacher named Mr. Hawkins. "Each Monday morning, Mr. Hawkins greets every student at the door with a positive affirmation" (p.145). This chapter continues to guide us describing Mr. Hawkins ways to "build strong relationships, hope, engagement, success and respect" (p.145). Mr. Hawkins uses that first impression of the week to set the tone for the class period. The simple act of customer service can impact students for the rest of the day.

### **Building Relationships**

In the book *Interpersonal Communication, Everyday Encounters*, Wood (2004) writes about how to invest in your everyday relationships with intention. "Good relationships grow out of investments...In workplace relationships we invest time, energy, thought and feeling...Investment is powerful, and it reflects personal choice" (p.212). Customer service employees are investing into the relationship with their customers just as teachers invest in their relationship with students. The National Science Foundation funded research showing that a "tenth of a second is sufficient for people to make a specific trait inference from facial appearance...it takes as little as three minutes to determine how a relationship will progress" (Lucas, 2011, p.65). It is important to build off the first impression and make a connection that forms a good relationship.

A good relationship can be a foundation for learning in the classroom. The professional development book *Classroom Management that Works* by Robert Marzano, states that when students and teachers have a good relationship "then students more readily accept the rules and procedures" (2003, p.41). When rules and procedures are in place a student can begin to accept the learning. Relationships start the conversation to rules and procedures. Maintaining a healthy relationship within the classroom is important. It comes down to "how we treat and interact with others" (Shanken, 2009, p.66). In *Roadmap to Responsibility: The Power to Give 'em Five to Transform Schools*,

Thompson (2015) states that “Unfortunately, some school discipline techniques actually do the opposite of reducing stress by relying on various forms of embarrassment to shame students” (p. xi). Thompson (2015) continues to discuss the long-term effect of his encounters with students. He explains that when you demonstrate a genuine interest in another person you can touch and change them forever (p. xii - xiv). One of the most successful restaurants that I worked in started every shift out with a quick staff meeting. The General Manager would always check in with the staff personally before reminding them of the rules and nightly procedures. It is amazing how well a staff can perform when they feel a manager is invested in them personally. This is the same with the relationships between students and teachers.

### **Professionalism**

Shanken (2009) quotes the Merriam-Webster dictionary with the definition of professionalism “(1) the conduct, aims, or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or a professional person; (2) the following of a profession (as athletics) for gain or livelihood” (p.63). Shanken continues to state that in the workplace this is the general code of how a person should conduct themselves regarding behavior and dress. Professionalism should be the ideal image you have of your establishment. “It is more the attitude toward the job... It is about the quality of your work and the personal ethics that you display in dealing with others” (Lucas, 2011 p.79).

In the article, *Only you Can Prevent Forest Fires: Professionalism in the Workplace*, Shanken (2009) writes about how to use professionalism etiquette. “It can be described as conforming to the standards of skill, competence, or character normally expected of a properly qualified and experienced person in a work environment” (p.63). All the skills that Shanken mentions describes an individual who understands people and knows how to support the connections with people in the work environment. These skills can be used in a classroom with students to build and maintain a healthy relationship in times of conflict. Shanken writes that you should think before you speak and respond to emails. Anger should not get in the way of your communication. In my experience, this is important to remember this when communicating with customers in the classroom or in the restaurant. The customer should always feel good about a situation even when we think they are in the wrong.

Subroto Bagchi (2009) writes in the book *The Professional* different ways that an individual can develop professionalism. Bagchi explains that to be a professional one must be a true professional. “We must embrace the traditional meaning of the word “professional” and take a personal oath, promising we will do our best; we will bring our knowledge, skills and attitude to make a difference to others and to regulate ourselves” (2009, p.4). Bagchi continues to explain that a true professional can work unsupervised, complete jobs and have integrity. True professionals build relationships, understand time, and embrace new challenges.

These are the characteristics that are also found in restaurant customer service whereby an individual is more than just their position. A server for example can be a professional if they go beyond the delivery of food. When a person goes out of their way to see a bigger picture of what needs to be done to be successful for the company they employ. They are fully committed to the establishment beyond their position. Translating this to the classroom, would be a teacher that teaches the whole child or that has involvement outside their content area to support the school as a whole. They are committed to the school's mission and stakeholders as well as their content area.

Bagchi (2009) describes an unprofessional person as someone who misses deadlines, does not communicate properly or is not taking care of their appearance. The unprofessional server can be perceived as lazy. This is the server that sticks to the basic script for each table and only does what is needed. This server thinks that you are only worth their time because it is their job. There is no drive or motivation. There is no desire to connect with their customers. This can translate into the classroom as the teacher that does the same. This teacher shows up, puts forth minimal effort and only does what they are supposed to. However, there is no real connection with the students or their curriculum. They have lost an opportunity to sell an experience and learning to their students. Bagchi implies that a person who has professionalism is always asking, what does my client need? And what do I need to do to meet those needs?

### **Modeling**

In my middle school experience, the students benefit from seeing examples of effective communication. It is important for teachers to model this type of interaction. Wood’s (2004) textbook *Interpersonal Communication, Everyday Encounters* discusses

interpersonal conflicts. The textbook describes different interactions between the people and then explains to the reader how to become a better communicator. Conflicts are necessary growing points for communication. They “exist when people who depend on each other express different views, interests, or goals” (p. 241). It is impossible not to have conflicts; it is how we handle them that is important. “Although we tend to think of conflict negatively, it can be beneficial in a number of ways. When managed constructively, conflict provides opportunities for us to grow as individuals and to strengthen our relationships” (p. 247).

In the classroom when we have conflict with a student it can be used as an opportunity to grow a stronger relationship with that student, as well as model to the student how to communicate during the conflict. This will impact not only the student involved but others that are witnessing the conflict. “Whenever an adult listens patiently, or shows concern for someone he doesn’t know, or apologizes for something he regrets having said, he is modeling for students, teaching them how they might be with each other” (Kohn, 1996, p.113). How to handle conflict is an important life skill and is beneficial for them in social and future work situations. In chapter nine of Wood’s (2004) textbook describes everyday situations where conflict can occur. Within these descriptions an individual can learn everyday applications to help shape themselves in conflict for future situations.

Flip Flippen’s (2015) program *Capturing Kids Hearts* shows educators how to model conflict in the classroom. The *Process Champions Participant Manual* encourages teachers how to write social contracts with their classes. This is a great tool to facilitate conversations with students about how they want the environment of the classroom to be. This is not about classroom rules but about building a safe and comfortable environment that the students have choice in. While writing the social contract, teachers are asked to talk about “How do we want to treat each other when there is conflict?” (p.13). This could be a model for how to handle a conflict between peers or teachers. In the restaurant industry the manager has this type of conversations with employees continuously to keep the environment safe and comfortable. The Flippen Group has also brought these communication skills directly to the students in their Teen Leadership program. The

*Middle School Student Manual* discusses the importance of self-control and communication in conflict as an opportunity for growth (2015).

Teachers that fail to model communication during conflicts and everyday communications, could find themselves with classroom management difficulties or a student can find themselves in a discipline situation. A connection needs to be made before you can model how to handle a conflict. Students will not hear you if there is no relationship. Alfie Kohn in *Beyond Discipline*, (1996) also states that there is a need for connection before discipline. The first questions we ask ourselves in our classroom should be “What do children need? This should be followed immediately by How can we meet those needs?” (p. xv). Kohn’s (1996) book provides insight into exemplary teachers' classrooms and how these educators connect and handle situations with students. If there are connections with students, there likely will be less misbehavior. Positive classroom management relationships are key in modeling how to handle conflict.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship**

Educational criticism and connoisseurship is a qualitative research method created by Elliot Eisner (1976). This method has become established in educational research and was the methodology used in this study. I chose this methodology because the qualitative methods that are used to collect data were appropriate to my research design. Eisner (2002) paraphrased John Dewey by saying “Artists inquire in a qualitative mode both in the formulation of ends and in the use of means to achieve such ends” (p.213). I think that it is important to think about not only the results of the study but the background and process leading to the end results. Qualitative research encompasses “not only the teaching and other forms of human activity, but also objects such as buildings and books” (Eisner, 1998, p.5). This methodology guides the approach to my study to ensure the greater outcome of the study for educational purposes. Eisner (1998) developed this qualitative approach to contribute to the improvement of education and educational practices.

Educational connoisseurship is the art of appreciation in an educational setting, for example the classroom. A connoisseur has a personal relationship with something and can recognize and appreciate certain qualities that are not always apparent to the general public (Eisner, 2002). Being a connoisseur of education “requires that the researcher have enough educational knowledge to be able to observe the subtleties and intricacies of the educational setting” (Moroye, 2007, p.46). Educational criticism is the art of disclosure. A critic focuses on the qualities of what is being appreciated by the connoisseur. It is the public side of connoisseurship and it can be interpretive and evaluative (Eisner, 2002). In this method both criticism and connoisseurship work together to provide a nuanced and educated picture of what is observed. “One can be a great connoisseur without being a critic, but one cannot be a critic of any kind without some level of connoisseurship” (Eisner, 1998, p.86).

**Observer**

This method fits my study because I am a connoisseur by nature. Eisner writes that the act of having knowledgeable perception is considered connoisseurship. One does not have to have years of experience to be an expert but have the desire to perceive all the subtleties and become a student of human behavior (Eisner, 2002). He also states that a connoisseur uses their sensory memory to develop a perception and an appreciation for things. Eisner gives the example of a connoisseur of wine and the ability to remember good wines and have the knowledge of having tasted lots of wine in order to appreciate the specific wine in the moment (2002).

This research builds upon my experience in education. I did attend (at some level) six different colleges within two different states before I completed my education degree at the University of Northern Colorado (UNC). While in the UNC teacher education program I felt a strong desire to observe in as many different schools that I could. I was in twelve different schools, in four different school districts before I finished the program. I wanted to gain the experience of being in different school settings and observe how they worked. Before graduating with my teaching license, I gained a substitute teaching license in two different districts with the hope of gathering more knowledge and experience in teaching. I taught elementary for two years before moving into middle school. I am able to reflect on my experiences in order to appreciate the specific educational knowledge I have now.

My history in the restaurant industry consists of more experience. Self-reflection on my past experiences will contribute to this study as part of my research. I have nineteen years of experience that include fourteen different restaurants that vary in food, quality and service. I was employed in two different states that varied in expectations and developmental trainings of the industry. I also use my observations as a patron of dining out. I feel my role as a guest in restaurants adds to my knowledge base. I have the experience to reflect and appreciate the restaurant industry as well education.

**Structure**

Educational criticism uses four main structures: description, interpretation, evaluation and thematics. Description sets the scene for the readers. It helps the readers visualize the scene and encounters of the events. It is important for a critic to give the

reader the context of the environment with acuteness of detail. The reader must be able to capture the qualities through words (Eisner, 2002). Eisner implies that the retelling of the environment must not be embellished or ornamental. It should be knowledgeable and have validation. As the critic you do not have to tell the whole story but selectively recall in patterns where the reader naturally fills in the blanks and makes a vivid scene that is significant to the study (Eisner, 1998).

Interpretation can be similar to that of description, except for interpretations tend to have emphasis and focus. The facts by themselves are not as interesting as the illuminations of them. Attention is focused on theories from social sciences and made relevant to the situation by the relationships within. There are many possibilities to each situation we observe. Using prior knowledge and past experiences help the critic interpret the situation. Context clues help with interpretation as the critic makes relationships between events (Eisner, 2002).

Evaluation is applying judgment on the value of education in hopes to improve educational processes. A critic makes the judgment on how well the processes are being executed then uses their knowledge and educational philosophies to place value on the processes. The role of the critic and connoisseur combined is trying to use these situations to educate and improve (Eisner, 1998).

Thematics could be stated as the summary that guides the reader to the point of the study. It states the major ideas and enables the reader to understand and appreciate educational points. The reader does not have to agree or like the summary, but the reader should have a knowledgeable awareness of the subject matter (Eisner, 2002). This awareness helps guide the reader to make connections and conclusions about educational practices.

### **Procedures**

Customer service is a new topic for most school districts and even newer within the context of classrooms procedures. In order to answer my research questions, I felt I needed to seek out what customer service looks like and how it was being used within classrooms. Classroom observations seemed like an appropriate path to my findings. I chose to use only one district for my observations. This gave me a focused study in order to see if there were trends or themes throughout a controllable amount of observations.

Because the district that I chose had six schools of all grade levels in it, I decided that I would choose two teachers to observe at each location. This provided me twelve opportunities to gather data. I learned that the district I choose does offer district wide professional development trainings however, each individual school had specific developments also. I felt this could give me a pool of different skill sets to observe within one district.

I received approval for my research from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in January of 2020. I completed my observations in a two-month window. I felt like this was an appropriate amount of time to that did not interfere with any school events within this district. I pre-scheduled and spaced out my observations as not to interfere with the teaching of my own classroom as well.

### **Participants**

I received approval from my chosen district prior to applying for my IRB. Immediately after approval I emailed all six principals to ask permission from them to be in their schools. With district approval from the Superintendent I did not have to ask each principal for permission, however, my experience in customer service has taught me that formal and proper communication is very important. While communicating with these principals, it became apparent that several of them wanted to be involved in deciding who I would observe within their school. There were a total of three school principals that chose all or some of the teachers that I observed. I have no knowledge of how the principal chose these teachers except that it may have had something to do with the subject of my research.

I was able to choose all other educators that I observed. I tried to use art teachers throughout the district so that I had a familiar environment in which to observe. However, I was not able to observe in all the art teachers' classrooms. Among the teachers that I chose I feel there was a variety of grade levels and content areas represented. I hoped that with the variety there would be different areas to witness customer service skills. I did not choose any teacher based on age, gender or years of service, which I felt were of no consequence to my study. The objective was to find and describe interactions in the classroom that mimicked that of customer service.

The students that were present in their classroom at the time of my observations were also indirect participants. Because I was observing the skills that their teacher was using within the classroom that applied to them, I could not eliminate them from the observational notes. However, I did not directly interact with the students because I was not approved for this in my IRB and it did not play a role in my research. Several teachers did find it appropriate to introduce me to the students and acknowledge my presence with the class. Which I noted as a great customer service skill that models communication.

### **Data Collection and Observations**

All participants signed consent forms. These teachers were asked to proceed through their normal classroom procedures and daily routines. As researcher and observer, I took notes on what the participant was doing. I looked for any form of customer service skills performed. I did not have a preset of skills listed as I was hoping to find and develop this list through my observations. Customer service skills could look different in each classroom and interaction. Any relational communication was noted in my observational notes. I took these notes on my laptop while I sat in the back of the room where I would not be in the way. I did not want to interrupt the flow of the normal classroom.

After my data was collected from all twelve observations. I looked for themes within the observational notes. I found that while I was trying to organize my thoughts and notes I was drawn to five different areas of customer service. These areas are proactive and reactive, impressions, relationships, professionalism, and modeling.

### **Limitations**

There is a high turnover rate for teachers in this district at approximately 21% for the current school year 2019-2020 (D.P., personal communication, March 12, 2020). This is a total of 29 first-year teachers throughout the district. The number of years in education may have a direct impact on the amount of professional development and classroom management skills that are being used for a specific teacher. The district budgets \$69,000 for professional development and training (D.M., personal communication, March 12, 2020). This does not include a collective \$5,600 that is taken

out of individual school building funds for additional professional development (D.M., personal communication, March 12, 2020).

Principals in this district can choose professional development for their schools on an individual school basis. I believe that the evidence of customer service used in the classroom is dependent on the focus of professional development that was offered within that school. One critical factor that may have impacted my results is the timing of when the professional development trainings were delivered to teachers. Newer teachers may not have received the same training as a veteran teacher. This may impact the use of customer service skills observed.

I believe that the date, day of the week and time in which I observed may have affected the amount of customer service I saw as well. Limiting my observations to one district constricted my findings to a specific area. The students and teachers within my district may have different training and experience that will affect the way that they treat students and manage their classrooms. The specific student clientele that this smaller rural district has may also play into the data that I collected.

The presence of myself as an observer within the classroom may also change the behaviors that a teacher demonstrates. Being the sole observer may restrict the findings of my data based off only what I see or connect to. My previous history and strong beliefs of the subject prior to research may have impacts on the data collected during observations.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

To imagine is to generate images; to see is to experience qualities. Both the content of the world and the content of our imagination are dependent upon qualities. It is through the perception of qualities—not only those we can see, but those we experience through any of our senses—that our consciousness comes into being (Eisner, 1998, p.1)

To help answer my research questions; how do educational professional development skills aid in the success of a teacher in their classroom? and How do these skills mimic the skills learned in customer service? I have separated my twelve observations into five different categories. These areas are proactive and responsive, first impressions, building relationships, professionalism and modeling. To get a full image of the classroom setting I will paint you a metaphorical picture of the unique school environments.

#### **School Environments**

“To understand the kind of place a school or classroom is, we need to have the kind of account that will enable us to know what it would feel and look like if we were there” (Eisner, 1998, p.89). The classrooms that I observed fell into one of two settings primary or secondary. For the purpose of this study primary is considered the elementary classrooms of grades K-5 and secondary consisting of middle school and high school grades 6-12.

The primary classrooms that I observed were fun and vibrant. As I walked down the hallway of all three elementary schools, I could feel the excitement of the students. There were posters on the walls with bright colors and student work was proudly hung. You could hear the laughter and conversations of the students echoing around. All three buildings had recently undergone some renovations and fresh carpet and paint were evident. The entrance doors for these classrooms were decorated uniquely showing their school spirit and the pride of each other within. When entering these classrooms, I could feel the excited learning environment and the uplifting spirits of the students. Desks were scattered and grouped uniquely in each room. Flexible seating options were noticeable in all six classrooms.

The secondary environments that I observed were enriched learning environments showing school spirit. There were posters on the walls about upcoming school events. All three of these buildings had recently undergone renovations also and the cleanliness of the environment was evident. Teachers stood in the hallways during transitional periods and you could hear the liveliness of the environment throughout the hallways. Classrooms were decorated inside the doorway with various targeted learning posters. Desks were arranged uniformly facing the teacher.

### **Proactive vs Responsive**

#### **Teacher One**

I walked into this classroom after instruction had started. Teacher One (T1) smiled at me and gestured with her head where to sit. I sat in the back corner of the room next to her desk. It was cluttered with papers and overflowing with items. I sat and pulled out my computer while I watched the classroom. It was full of students working on their projects. There was a vibe of busyness and students were scooting all over the room to gather what they needed while quickly getting back to work. They were happy with each other and giggling as they created. T1 was in the corner directly in front of me helping students with a material that looked quite messy. She seemed stressed. She was frantic and frustrated at the process. Students gathered around her waiting for their turn. As they waited, they were chatting with their friends and playing with their projects. This seemed to create more chaos for T1, and she began to try to redirect them and settle them down as they waited.

The class time went on with students going in and out of the line for her help. Towards the end of class an alarm went off and she began to shout out clean up orders. Students were talking while she directed clean up. This seemed to frustrate her, and she stopped the students to speak to them about listening properly and following directions. Then the classroom teacher came to the door. It must have been sooner than she expected because the students were not finished cleaning up. T1 tried to hurry the students to finish cleaning and then checked their tables before they could line up. After T1 had allowed the students to line up, she and the classroom teacher discussed specific students in the hallway. It was slightly muffled; however, I could clearly hear the names of the students they were discussing. Students in line were getting bored and started wiggling around and

talking to each other. After several minutes T1 came back into the classroom showing aggravation with the students and the shape of their line. She redirected them to straighten their line, stand still and remain quiet.

### **Teacher Five**

When I arrived at Teacher Five's (T5) classroom I could hear the students working inside the room cheerfully. Their voices were a bit loud but sounded very excited. I knocked on the door and a student let me in. I was greeted by T5 and quickly introduced me to the students as an observer for their presentations. T5 pointed to where I could sit and then reminded the students, they had only a few more minutes to prepare and then it was time to start. The classroom hummed with joy over what was happening, and they quickly gathered their materials and finished what they were working on. As I sat there, I watched as the teacher walked around and answered last minute questions from the students. T5 stopped after a few minutes saying, "Voices off in 3... 2... 1". It was clear the students knew what was expected of them. They were dead quiet and not moving by the time T5 got to "1". T5 went through directions on how to set up their presentation and what they needed to have with them when presenting. She referred to a rubric which all the students had and seemed very knowledgeable about. She gathered her notebook and walked behind the group of students towards the back of the classroom. "Let's talk about how to be a good audience" she said as sat down. All the students faced as she T5 spoke of things like listening respectfully and making eye contact. Then she asked why we need to do this. Students responded and T5 listened to each student speak. When she spoke again, she asked the students "What happens when we make mistakes?" The teacher and her students chatted for a while about expectations and the importance of how we interact during the presentation. When the presentations started, I noticed that all students in the audience were quiet and respectful; each one making eye contact and actively listening to their peers.

### **Teacher Nine**

I entered the classroom in the middle of work time. It was a full classroom and each table had students who actively working on their projects. Teacher Nine (T9) was walking around the room busily helping students and did not seem to notice my appearance. I watched as she calmly bounced from table to table helping students. As

more and more students needed her and called her name, she remained calm. As she helped individual students, she would make eye contact with other students that called for her. Giving a smile and a nod would satisfy the other students until she could reach them and help. While speaking with students she was very intentional about giving them the attention they needed until she moved on. When she finally noticed my arrival, she smiled and waved and continued with students. Much of the class period was spent watching her move from one question to the next and calmly problem-solving project issues with the students.

### **Interpretation and Evaluation**

A proactive person as someone that is prepared and forward thinks (Bagchi, 2009). A server in a restaurant is often responsive when they do not think through their processes. After taking an order from a table a server can be proactive by ringing in the appetizer before refilling the table's beverages. Then after refilling beverages ringing the main course. Thinking through this step will create a timely delivery of the courses to the table. A server that is not proactive with the timing will become reactive later in the dining experience.

T1 was responsive to the classroom environment. She was being consumed by the chaos and her frustration was deflecting into her classroom. This response was causing more chaos within and coming across negatively towards the students. If T1 took the time to think through her processes, her outcomes may have been different. "Our behavior is a function of our decisions, not our conditions" (Covey, 1989 p.79). Kohn (1996) writes that chaos occurs when classrooms are not tightly regulated. Taking the time to lay out the processes for students is a proactive approach to your classroom structure. Learning the skill of being proactive can help them with the processes and handle the situation differently. T5 showed the ability to think through her lesson and prepare not only herself but the students for what is to come. This eliminated the need to be reactive to how the students were going to handle the presentations.

T9 was needed constantly by her students but she never let the panic transfer to her students. She was proactive by acknowledging the students as they needed her but made each student the center of her focus as she was speaking with them. I have personally referred to this as the 'transfer of panic' in customer service. In customer

service the skill of not ‘transferring the panic’ could be the same as being proactive. A server could find themselves in a situation where they have too many tables than normal to wait on. Many servers might not be able to handle this and become reactive to the situation. Creating a negative environment. If a server were a reactive person, that ‘panic’ would show at every one of their tables and cause more stress to an already stressful situation. Thinking through your processes and communicating them to your tables is a proactive approach to a stressful situation.

### **First Impressions**

#### **Teacher Eight**

Teacher Eight (T8) was already teaching when I entered the classroom. I walked in and stood in the back. The room was noisy with chatter. She greeted me with a head nod and I took my place in the back of the room. T8 went back to talking with a student. “You should have gotten a pencil before, get it together” she said to the student. I immediately thought she was upset with this student by the tone in her voice. She was sitting at a desk in front of the room going over a problem that was projected on the white board. She waited and watched as the student got up and got a pencil. The student desks were grouped by where she was sitting. It seemed very congested to me, but the students seemed comfortable in the space. Students seemed to be working on something but felt free to chat while they did. When the student came back she finished helping them and then T8 got up and walked around the room. She was chatty with the students and a little sarcastic. The students responded to her with the same sarcasm.

#### **Teacher Seven**

I watched Teacher Seven (T7) greet her students at the door entrance with a handshake and a smile before they could enter. As we followed them into the classroom students were already at their seats getting supplies out for their lesson. A late student arrived and was greeted from across the room with “Great to see you, I like your hair today!” Before their lesson began T7 had the students share their happy things for the day and personal stories. While each student shared T7 squared up to them and listened intently. The first student shared, and the entire class gave two claps affirming them. Then second student shared and T7 noticed that they seemed off while they were sharing. T7 asked a follow up question to check in “Are you doing ok today?” Before the second

student could answer there was a knock at the door. T7 dealt with the knock and when she returned, she apologized to the second student for interrupting their time and asked them to finish. When the student was done talking the class gave two claps. T7 replied “Class that was a weak clap. Let's try again and make sure they feel it.”

### **Interpretation and Evaluation**

Flippen (2015) explained that “We only have 30 seconds to make a first impression” (p.11). If we do not make it in this small window, he states that it can take up to twenty additional encounters to change a bad first impression (Flippen, 2015). In restaurants this is extremely important to understand. A hostess has Thirty seconds from the time you arrive at the restaurant to create a pleasant impression of the business. It was most important to train and teach a hostess how to create that impression. This is the same for any employee that is working when the customer arrives. Bad perceptions can be made when employees are busy chatting, on their phones, doing their side work (end of shift clean up) or anything else that might take away from serving the customer.

These two classrooms felt completely different to me as the observer. I had a bad first impression of the environment of the classroom of T8. I questioned right away the teaching strategies in the room because of the scene that I walked into. However, being acutely aware of my situation and myself as an observer, I was able to move forward and see that classroom differently by the end of the period. The students of T8 were very comfortable with her and it was clear that she did have good relationships with students. There must have been a history of better impressions that I did not see. I did not see the start of her class period. It leaves me to question what I missed before I was there.

This is important to note because with my research knowledge I was aware of the impact of a first impression and was able to move past the negative and look for more. Flip Flippen (2015) explains that sarcasm is a form of miscommunicating. He also states that “55% of every message is communicated through the use of body language. 38% of every message is communicated through you tone of voice. 7% of every message is communicated by your words.” (p.25). I was able to look for how she was communicating beyond the sarcasm to discover the relationships within the classroom.

I had a good impression of T7 classroom from the beginning. She started the class period with a positive impression with the students by greeting and affirming students at

the door. Students sharing their personal stories before the lesson started gave the students a feeling of being heard. Then the entire class had buy-in to what the lessons were. Spending this time in the beginning of class may seem like counterproductive classroom time; however, as the observer I believe it saved time in the end because students were bought into the lesson after sharing. In the *Capturing Kids Heart Program*, Flippen (2015) states to capture a student's mind we must first capture their heart.

### **Building Relationships**

#### **Teacher Four**

I arrived at Teacher Four's (T4) classroom when students were filing in the school. T4 was standing away from her classroom in the middle of the hallway greeting students as they walked by her on their way to their classrooms. It appeared to me that she must have been on hallway monitoring duty. Every student that passed gave a high five, said good morning or gave small hugs as they rushed to class. She was intentional in greeting every student that passed her way. I watched as she stopped a girl, leaned in, and asked her a question. I could not hear what they were talking about, but it looked like T4 was just checking in on something. The girl answered her and off she went.

When the hallway cleared T4 walked to her classroom and made an overall greeting to the entire class. "Good Morning All!" Students were gathering items. T4 asked the students to share out something from their evening while she took attendance. As each student spoke, she looked up from her computer to acknowledge them. Students shared small things such as dinner items and games played. Others updated T4 on family life and pets. This lasted a few minutes and when they were finished, they jumped right into the day's routine. T4 started with the schedule and expectations of the day. She walked over to where the schedule was posted and went through each part of it with clear instructions. She pointed out any changes that today would bring and students were able to comment. As I looked around the room, I could see that students did not have a seating chart. Flexible seating options were scattered throughout the room and it appeared to me that the students felt very much at home.

After the schedule for the day was finished, students gathered in the center of the room for what was called a "Morning Meeting". There was a question of the day posted with the schedule and this appeared to be the ice breaker for their day. Each student

answered the question and shared their thoughts. They listened to each other and as one student spoke, they all turned toward that student looking at them as they spoke. Students did not have a time limit. They could speak for however long they needed to express how they were feeling this morning. T4 shared her thoughts to the question also. As the last student finished, the announcements came over the speaker and all students sat quietly while they listened.

### **Teacher Three**

It was early before school, and I waited outside of Teacher Three's (T3) classroom for a few minutes. School had not yet started, and you could hear the students playing outside the building. Then a bell rang, and the hallways filled instantly with students. The sounds of excitement buzzed everywhere as T3 walked up to the classroom. We stood in the hallway as she greeted each student with "Good mornings!" and "Good to see you!" pleasantries before they entered the classroom. A few students high fived her or hugged her on their way in. When the last student rushed in T3 walked into the room and loudly said "Good Morning!" The entire class responded unanimously "Good Morning!" back at her. She introduced me as a guest and started to turn on her electronic devices. Students openly came up to me. They greeted me with sweet "Hello's" telling me their names while she set up for the day. It became apparent that her computer was not cooperating with her projector and students were eager to get up and help her problem solve the issue.

After a few minutes they moved on from the technology problems and started doing a morning movement break. Most students participated with the break. Students were free to join in or rest from the different movements. While the class stretched, they shared connections to the poses. Students led the conversation with the guidance from T3, they shared personal stories about friends and family members. There were a few students that did not participate in the movements; however, they were actively participating in the conversation. As they finished the students headed back to their seats and a late student arrived at the door. T3 immediately said "Hello (name) I am so glad that you are here!" The student sat down at a desk and got belongings out.

### **Teacher Eleven**

My observation of Teacher Eleven (T11) was impromptu. I was observing a different teacher and realized that I had finished early and had time to observe someone else before heading back to my classroom. I was directed to T11 by the teacher of the previous observation. I entered the classroom of T11 and caught her right before the bell rang. She was excited to have someone in her classroom and explained to me that it was an interesting day to observe. Students started to come in and were in immediate need of her assistance. I stepped aside and watched as T11 moved from one table to the next signing off on worksheets that students presented. The students were excited and full of energy. They chatted very freely with each other and T11. There was a great feeling in this room. It reminded me of family events where you are overly excited to see everyone and say hello.

After a few minutes the bell rang, and students sat down. She stood in front of the class reminding the students of a previous conversation from the day before. They were working on a project and they were going to a different classroom to continue working on it. As T11 finished I noticed that all the students were intently listening to her speak. She had everyone's attention. It only took a few minutes to walk down the hall to the new classroom. As we walked T11 chatted with students. I could hear that she asked students how their day was and how school was going. "What can I do to help?" she asked a student.

We arrived at the new classroom and the students went straight to work. It was apparent that the students knew exactly what to do. The class must have been through this process before. T11 gestured to where the supplies were as a reminder and there did not seem to be the need for any other directions. Students gathered in small groups and began to work on their project. The students were really enjoying the process but what I noticed was the communication and body language they had with T11. Students were actively engaged in their projects but were openly chatting with T11 about home life and school challenges while they worked. T11 made her way around the room multiple times checking in with the students. I heard her asking about grades and someone's grandmother. I saw her give one girl a shoulder hug and watched as that girl leaned her head on T11's shoulder to embrace the hug.

## **Interpretation and Evaluation**

Wood (2004) wrote “Good relationships grow out of investments...” (p.212). In restaurants investments grow good relationships too. From my experience investing in your employees create a work environment of enjoyment. This will also transfer into less turnover rates and inventory problems. Saving you time, energy and money in the long run. Employees will be invested into your business and beliefs because they are in return invested into you.

It was evident to me that each teacher was investing their personal time and classroom time into the students, not just as students, but as individual people. I saw classrooms of students that were comfortable and clearly felt safe. I saw investments into personal lives and extra curriculums. These teachers had insight and background knowledge about their students that extended far beyond the content area in which they taught. With this invested time in developing relationships, a teacher can help mold and grow individuals into students. Then the students will invest their time into learning because they have been invested into as a person.

## **Professionalism**

### **Teacher Ten**

The principal of Teacher Ten (T10) walked me to her classroom. He had forgotten to tell her that I was coming to observe. I found that uncomfortable but hoped that this teacher would not mind. T10 greeted the principal at the door with a formal greeting. She smiled and made direct eye contact as she introduced herself and welcomed me into her classroom. She was dressed very nicely and as I walked into her room, I noticed it was just as nice. It was clean and organized. Everything seemed to have a place. Students had already begun to arrive and were finding their seats. I wished I had not surprised T10 with my observation. She seemed calm about me being in her room; however, I saw her hurry around and straighten items, change her slide to the daily objectives and gather her supplies for the lesson. This could be her normal routine, but I somehow felt it was partially because of my presence. As students got seated and she prepared herself, I looked around. Objectives and standards were clearly posted on one wall. There were also useful writing tips on posters and neatly arranged items on the counter.

After the period bell rang, students opened their computers and started to type. It appeared that they knew their expectations and it seemed like they were typing their daily objectives and agenda, as they kept glancing at the projector screen as they typed. T10 waited patiently while they finished and closed their computers. T10 spoke about their assignments with a few reminders and asked if they had questions. The students were working on independent projects, but she decided that today they would group up and work through their questions together. The students seemed excited about this as if it was a new thing. When they finished, she waited for them to be calm before she spoke again. Directions were given and students grouped up to continue working on their assignment. The rest of the class time I watched as T10 met with each group of students and went through a check list of questions she had on a paper. The interactions with the students were directly about the assignments and there was little side chatter anywhere in the room about other subjects.

### **Teacher Twelve**

When I walked into the classroom of Teacher Twelve (T12) he was in the middle of speaking with his students. I must have been only a few minutes late after the bell, but they had already started in on the lecture. My tardiness interrupted and the class stopped to look at me for a quick minute. As I sat, I realized that there was a picture projected on the screen and everyone was looking at it while T12 spoke. It took the class and T12 a quick minute to refocus and finish his lecture. I sat down quietly and watched as T12 walked in and out of all the tables speaking to the students about what was projected. When he finished, the students were directed to complete the questions on the board on their computers.

The class was still and quiet for about five minutes while the students completed their warmup questions. T12 greeted me and explained that today was a workday and students were to work independently on their projects, while he was there to lend support and problem solve. He did not stay long to chat with me and started walking around the room. He did this repeatedly for quite some time. The students finished their computer work and immediately got their projects out. Some started working right away and others just seemed to sit there staring at their work. They were possibly reflecting on their next

steps on the project. T12 checked in on each table while they worked and helped direct those students that were not motivated.

While the students worked there was not a lot of talking. The little talking that happened was a quiet whisper amongst the students. Students seemed focused. T12 took attendance, walked around the room again and then checked something on his computer. He was very attentive and present with the students but did not actually interrupt them while they worked. The rest of the class period went on like this. At the end of the period students put their materials away and T12 spoke to them about important dates and class information and sent them away with a greeting.

### **Interpretation and Evaluation**

Lucas (2011) described being professional as more than an attitude toward a job. It is a quality of your work and how you deal with others. When I was still serving tables in restaurants, I tended to be a trainer of the new servers. It would be my responsible to show them how to be appropriately dressed and maintain their appearance. I would have to be the example of everything that I did. I learned the expectations from my manger, who learned it from hers. A school system is very much the same regarding this; teachers learn from Principals who learn from Superintendents and so on.

T10 was very obviously professional with her interactions. She kept herself and her classroom clean and orderly. Her observation could have been used for many different categories of skills that I saw. However, I could not get past my own thoughts of my surprise observation as I watched her. The surprise threw her off balance a little. It became aware to me that there were expectations in this school on classroom procedures. I would assume that past observers looked for items such as agendas, and objectives and possibly classroom management tools. While observing I saw opening and closing questions and collaboration that felt impromptu.

My biggest concern about the observation was the unprofessionalism that the principal showed. Because of his forgetfulness T10 felt pressured and did not fully understand why I was there and what I was observing. Bagchi (2009) writes that “In the word of business and professional dealings, people do not like to be taken by surprise” (p.69). It will cause unnecessary grief. The professional gesture of communicating proactively builds better relationships with your stakeholders. T10 however acted very

professional. “In extremely high-pressure situations, often the best emotion to express is control. And a true professional has a calibrated thermostat that prompts the degree of reaction and control required in any given situation” (Bagchi, 2009, p.60).

The observation of T12 had to do with my professionalism. Meyer (2008) states that “punctuality is nonnegotiable (p.158). We cannot always control our timing. Professionals in any field understand this. However, my tardiness threw off the class. I was late. Bagchi (2009) references time management as a primary trait for being a professional. My lack of time management caused a hiccup in his controlled environment. If I had not had a relationship with this teacher prior to my tardiness it would not have made the best impression.

### **Modeling**

#### **Teacher Two**

I arrived early for Teacher Two’s (T2) observation. It was lunch time. The rain was pouring down outside, and the students were in the library watching movie while the teachers finished their lunch. I was greeted by T2 at the library entrance where she gathered her students in a line. T2 gestured to the students demonstrating her stance and showed them how they should be in line. All the students followed in the gesture and then we walked to the classroom. When we arrived at the classroom, T2 halted the students and waited for the line to form against the wall. She individually greeted each student before they entered the classroom. There were hugs and high fives. Some students just said hello and walked in, but she made a point to give them an intentional moment before entering the room.

Inside the classroom the students sat at their desk and waited for instructions. T2 went to their calendar and pointed out what they were going to do. T2 reminded them of expectations and procedures. Undoubtedly the student knew the expectations and they went to work. While the other students worked at centers, T2 met with groups of 2-3 students to work on individual items. This appeared to be the intervention time. Students came up as they were called, and they worked with T2. She referred to them as ‘Friend’ as she called them to her. When they came to the table, she acknowledged them individually and gave directions.

As the students came and went it was clear that they knew the routine and what was expected. T2 scanned the room continuously while working with students individually. After a small amount of time, T2 stopped the class and asked them “What kind of voice?” Students replied together “Quiet voice” and they all went back to work. It occurred to me that I had not even noticed that the students were getting loud but as soon as she redirected them it was quiet again. A boy came up to the table where T2 was working and interrupted the intervention time. T2 held her hand to pause the student she was working with, turned her body to him and looked the boy in the eye while she spoke to him about the issue he was having with another student. She reminded him of expectations and what he should be doing during this time. The boy immediately walked away and went to work. She apologized to the student at the table.

### **Teacher Six**

When I arrived at the classroom of my next observation, I met the teacher in the hallway on her way out. She informed me that she was not going to be in the room with me while I was observing today. Her student teacher (T6) would be taking over the classroom this afternoon. She also informed me that there would also be a substitute teacher to be in the room to assist T6. I said goodbye and found myself a seat with the substitute teacher at a round table in the back. As I sat down the substitute teacher introduced herself and immediately went back to staring at her phone. I had arrived while the students were at specials. As they reentered the classroom T6 sat in the chair the students were grouped around her on the floor. “Class, Class” she said to get their attention and then she gave a descriptive narrative on what they would be doing. The room was set up for a rotation of different stations that the students were to be engaged in. She stood and motioned “Follow me as I travel around the room.” A few students interrupted her and said, “You mean navigate!” T6 smiled and said, “Great use of vocabulary words.” It was not obvious, but she undoubtedly wanted them to catch that and correct her.

T6 continued to explain how the students were to work their way through the stations. Once she finished, the students all stood and got to work. T6 worked with struggling students during some of this time. While she worked, she scanned the room checking on the other students. When she finished helping individual students, she

walked around the room going from group to group checking in. While I watched the interactions, there was little talking as the students worked independently.

During this work time, I watched as the substitute that sat next to me made random comments about specific students. I felt uncomfortable because the room was so quiet, and I am sure everyone could hear. I tried to appease her, but I made it politely obvious that I was more interested in taking notes as I observed, and she eventually got bored with me. The substitute teacher stood and started to walk around the room reading posters on the wall. When she had circled her way around the room back to her seat, she pulled her phone out again and went back to scrolling.

### **Interpretation and Evaluation**

In my restaurant experiences, when I would teach the hostess how to interact with a customer I would role play with them. We would act out the scene in order to know what to do. This is the same with having a server practice at a table. In education we also practice teaching during our pre-service years. In Wood's (2004) textbook *Interpersonal Communications Everyday encounters* he uses models for every communications situation. Throughout the book you can read through different situations that model how to communicate or address something. As teachers we modeling as a teaching strategy to show students how to correctly do something.

T2 appeared to use examples and modeling in her instruction often. She showed students what to do by physically moving her body and facial expressions with her instruction. This made it clear to the students what to do and how to do it. I never felt like there were holes in her instructions with the students. I watched her speak intentionally with students using her facial expressions and body language to model how to communicate with each other. T6 exhibited similar ways of modeling as well. The students were shown ostensible ways to communicate and interact. Modeling helps students to better understand real world experiences. Teachers guiding classroom behaviors can help develop individual behaviors (Wang, Chen, Yang, Liu, 2014). This is exactly what these teachers were doing with their students. They are giving students a place to practice communication based on behaviors and expectations modeled for them by the teacher.

The substitute teacher from T6's classroom was failing to model professionalism for the students. In my opinion, teachers must model so much more than good communication. In today's world a teacher needs to show students life skills. We also need to model voice and opinions. We need to model resistance with regard to overindulgence of technology. As a manager I had to lock away my phone. If I did not want my employees to be on their phone I could not be on my phone. If I wanted my staff to think of the restaurant first, I had to show them how to think about the restaurant first. These are not natural instincts. These are teachable thought patterns that are learned through modeling.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter I describe that I saw evidence of customer service skills in five different categories of proactive and responsive, first impressions, building relationships, professionalism and modeling. I found and identified elements of classroom management that connected to restaurant customer service.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

Classroom management skills being used in classrooms are similar to customer service skills used in a restaurant. This study provided a look into classrooms and the skills used in everyday interactions. The results of my observations found common themes between the two different industries. Educating teachers with customer service skills can help provide a better experience for student and teacher in the classroom.

My past experiences led me to this study. In Chapter One I give insight into why I feel this study is relevant in education and the benefits that I can see coming from this study. I feel that teaching these skill sets are essential to the success of teachers today. Chapter Two explored the literature supporting the skills that I found in my observations and helped guide us into Chapter Three where I explain the research method of educational criticism and connoisseurship. This method allowed us to see the rich multilayered events that unfolded within the classroom (Eisner, 2002). Using this method, I describe each observation in Chapter Four. By grouping my observations together by the themes that I found, I am able to provide insight into the restaurant industry and the connections to the classroom situations. In Chapter Five I will provide further connections and personal interpretations that will identify themes and recommendations.

#### **Themes**

This study set out to find the answers to two research questions: How are customer service skills used in the classroom? And How do these skills aid in the success of the teacher and students within their classroom? I found in this study that indeed the two different skill sets do mimic each other. I also clearly saw that they aided with the success of the classroom. These skills are a valuable tool set for any individual to succeed.

In all twelve of my observations I saw themes of proactive vs reactive, first impressions, building relationships, professionalism and modeling. Grouping my observations into these specific skill categories made it easier to discuss and compare

specific classroom skill sets to restaurant experience. However, I think that it is important to point out that in all twelve of my observations I saw crossover between different skills being used. Effective teachers used a combination of skills to be successful in the classroom and in my experience, these are the most successful employees in a restaurant. The educators that I observed that were not as successful as others clearly showed where they were missing the skills needed to succeed.

In the table below I show the crossover of skills identified in this study. I also limited my findings to only what I specifically discussed in Chapter Two. By doing this, it may leave out other observable skills used by the teacher. By glancing at Table A, you can clearly see which skill sets each teacher used or needed.

Table A

*Customer Service Skills used in Observation of Teachers*

	Proactive/Reactive	Impressions	Relationships	Professionalism	Modeling
T1	Reactive to environment	Did not see evidence with students	Did not see evidence	My impression of the conversation that happened in the hallway was unprofessional because it was in front of other students	Poor modeling to students of communicating and handling environment
T2	Proactive classroom routine in place, repeated schedule, gestured stance for line	Greeted students at library and then at the door before entering classroom	Referred to students as friend	Taught communication, how to handle a friend situation	Line expectations, classroom voice, classroom expectations
T3	Proactive with classroom routine	Greeted students at door and checked in with them	Shared personal stories and follow up questions	Did not see evidence	Did movement break with students, shared personal story and actively listened with gestures, Modeled appropriate reaction to tech issues
T4	Proactive with calendar and expectations	Greeting student in hallway and in classroom attendance	Shared personal stories and connections	Schedule, duty expectations, share	Shared her story, modeled listening
T5	Proactive with expectations before they happened	Positive impression on myself with greeting and introduction of me to the students	It was clear that the students were free to be themselves and enjoyed the class	Teaching to whole child and teaching of life skills	Was very intentional of modeling how to listen and act
T6	Proactive with exaptation	Did not see evidence	Saw little evidence however used	Did not see evidence	Modeled how to used and interact with stations

	and routine of stations		friendly words as she spoke to students		appropriately. Modeled vocabulary and speech.
T7	Proactive with directions and expectations	Greeted each student at the door with affirmations	Shared personal stories	Lesson, classroom, interactions	Clearly modeled how to share and interact with each other, Modeled appropriate reaction to interruption at door
T8	Reactive with student in conversation	Negative first impression by myself	Sarcasm made it difficult to confirm but overall seemed to have good relationships with students	Did not see evidence	Did not see real evidence. Sarcasm could be considered bad modeling
T9	Proactive with affirming each student as they needed her when she was busy with someone else	Did not see evidence	Small connections with students as they talked	Did not see evidence	Modeled patience and wait time
T10	Proactive with classroom routines and structures	professional first impression	Did not see evidence	Classroom organization, routine structures	Wait time, questioning, listening
T11	Proactive with classroom expectations prior to lesson	Students greeted her based off relationships	asked questions and inquired about the personally	Taught whole child	Did not direct evidence, modeled communication and caring
T12	Proactive with routines and expectations	Did not see evidence with students	Teacher is a coach and there were relationships with students that were players	Saw little evidence, stuck to routine and constantly checking in	Modeled conversation, vocabulary on art

### Findings

Teachers that used multiple skills throughout the observation appeared to be more successful with students. Five teachers showed evidence of all identified skills and in my opinion were the most successful. These teachers appeared to have more student buy in, better relationships with students and clearer delivery of instruction. I also saw less room for behavioral issues in these classrooms. The teachers that used the least amount of these skills in their classroom seemed to have the most struggles. I did not find any evidence that these teachers were not effective in facilitating student learning. That is another

study, however, I suspect that in not incorporating the skills identified, they may have been creating unnecessary obstacles for learning in their classrooms.

### **Recommendations**

One of the limitations of this study is that I was the only observer. I wonder if a second observer would notice different skill areas. I also feel that the date, day of the week, time, other school events or personal items with the teachers or even weather phenomena may have affected the outcomes of my observations. If I were to continue this study, I would consider including multiple observations for each teacher to get a wider range of their skills. I could also do an experimental study with a controlled group.

### **Improvement of Practice**

This research specifically addressed five observable customer service skills. As a researcher I am interested in learning what other customer service skills are useful in the classroom. I would like to continue to research and explore different customer service skills that could be helpful for educators.

I feel that this study has reinforced a skill set that was once used daily in my previous profession. I know that whether we refer to these skills as classroom management or customer service they are a necessary set of skills within our educational system. Moving forward I am interested in continuing to develop a toolbox full of skill sets that I can share and teach to other art educators. I would like to teach various levels of professional trainings that can offer aid to pre-service teachers. I feel that I have greatly benefited from having a background with these skills and I believe it aids in the success of my classroom.

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APPENDIX A  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



*Institutional Review Board*

DATE: December 17, 2019  
TO: Teresa Lantz  
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB  
PROJECT TITLE: [1514634-2] Customer Service in the Classroom  
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification  
ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS  
DECISION DATE: December 17, 2019  
EXPIRATION DATE: December 17, 2023

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Morse at 970-351-1910 or [nicole.morse@unco.edu](mailto:nicole.morse@unco.edu). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.

## APPENDIX B

## CONCENT FORM FOR OBSERVATION


 CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH  
 UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Customer Service within the Classroom  
 Researcher: Teresa Lantz  
 Phone Number: (970) 631-7247  
 e-mail: teresalantz@gmail.com

Advisor contact Information:  
 Connie Stewart  
 University of Northern Colorado  
 School of Art and Design  
 Connie.Stewart@unco.edu  
 970-351-2426

I am researching customer service within the classroom and extended through the schools and district if necessary for my research. As a participant in the research, you will be observed in normal daily classroom activities. These observations will be during your regular scheduled class times and regular schedule routines within your class. The objective of the observations will consist of finding areas in which you are using customer service skills within your classroom.

For the observable research, you will not need to provide any personal information, such as your name or gender. No classroom personal classroom information will be used in the research such as student's names, gender or specific age group. Only the educational level in which you teach such as primary, middle or secondary will be stated within the research. Results of the study will be presented in a formal written thesis of my findings.

Risks to you are minimal. You will see and feel my presence in your classroom. However, as researcher I will not interrupt any part of your classroom or regular routines within your classroom. I will not interact with your students as researcher. There will be no follow up questions or information necessary after observation within the classroom.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Please take your time to read and thoroughly review this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate, your completion of the research procedures indicates your consent. Please keep or print this form for your records. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Research Compliance Manager, Office of Research, Nicole.Morse@unco.edu, 970-351-1910.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Subject's Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Researcher's Signature Date