
An Observation on a Class at the Rosa Parks Elementary School

Rosa Parks Elementary School is home to 984 students in the heart of City Heights. It is one of the largest elementary schools in the San Diego Unified School District; in comparison to the average amount of enrolled students at an elementary school in the state of California is 528 students. This elementary school serves grades preschool through fifth grade. There are four preschool classrooms, two TK/ Kinder classrooms, six Kindergarten, six first grade, six second grade, seven third grade, six fourth grade, and six fifth grade classrooms; bringing the total amount of classrooms to 42. The student to teacher ratio is 26;1. Since it is such a big school, they are equipped with many support staff on site, ranging from school counselors to speech therapists as well as different programs such as Biliteracy and parent projects. Rosa Parks Elementary is the school of the tigers, where students are reminded daily to "Do our best so we can be the best."

The classroom where the observation took place was held in Ms. Tanonis' class in room 603. Ms. Tanonis has been dedicated to teaching at Rosa Parks Elementary School since 1998. Although she has been teaching Kindergarten for 20 years now, it is only her first-year teaching Transitional Kindergarten. Her classroom is combined with 13 TK (Transitional Kindergarten) students and 12 Kindergarten students; all the students are five years of age. Ms. Tanonis takes all of the non-bilingual TK students since there are only two TK classrooms at the school. During the time of the observation, there were only 20 out of 25 students present. Ms. Tanonis usually has a ratio of 25:1, although most of the time she is by herself, she does have a tutor from San Diego State University that comes in to lend assistance two days a week for five hours. The classroom is set up with 7 main tables, six of the tables are the students' seats, the last table is known to be the "round table" which activities such as reading groups and one on one time occurs. The six tables for the students have about 4-5 chairs and each table has a certain color theme to it, so the children can easily identify their assigned seat. At their tables each student has a colored pencil box with their name written on top, that is filled with supplies such as crayons, pencils, and a pair of scissors in it. Around the classroom are many different art assignments posted on the boards and above the student's heads. In the back of the classroom are the student's art folders which are compiled with their ABC colored sheets that will be used to make a portfolio at the end of the year so they can take home.

The space and objects in this classroom are not easily accessible for all levels of ability and disability. I believe the classroom may have been set up with good intentions, but, the classroom is not set up with the children being the first priority. The classroom has only one

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main area aside from their work tables where they can explore and bring materials out to play. There is an area in the back of the classroom that is covered up by the Smart Board which is known as the dramatic play area. This area has only been explored by the children twice, during the beginning of the school year. On the right side of the classroom, there are six desktop computers which are close to one another and just steps away from two of the round tables where students conduct their daily work. Although there are a few drawbacks to the accessibility, when it comes to free play, the students know exactly what to do and how to access the materials without assistance.

There are about four students who displaced social communication difficulties in the classroom during my observation. One of the students is a student whom many would consider to be very shy. She is quiet for most of the day and doesn't interact or participate in the classroom activities unless she has one on one support. To help assist with her communication Ms. Tanonis usually will call her up to the front by name and have a peer work together during activities. When the student has a trusted peer working alongside her, she begins to open up by giving the person eye contact and even displacing gestures such as shaking her head "yes" or "no" and moving her shoulders up and down as a way of communicating. Ms. Tanonis has reached out to the principal and other staff members regarding her concerns that there may, in fact, be a linguist barrier that is causing the communication difficulties. It would be great to have someone such as an aide or a tutor who speaks Spanish that can communicate to the student since she is an English learner. During the observation, I also witnessed many outbursts from the students during group time on the carpet. Ms. Tanonis would stop in the activities and remind the students who were doing the outburst that if they wanted to talk then they would need to raise their hands and wait to be called on. This is the assertive language which aims to support their needs of wanting to speak. Although Ms. Tanonis does use assertive language when outburst occurs, adding pictures of students raising their hands or even inputting a sign in the classroom that says, "Remember to raise your hand" and mentioning it every time before doing a group activity would better help the students of all abilities. That way students are reminded of what should be occurring not only auditory but visually as well; as we know that not every child learns in the same way.

The classroom does include some inclusion representations within the class. The biggest representation is seen through the guided books that they read in their daily reading groups with Ms. Tanonis. Each student receives a book bag which contains about five different books that range from different topics. One of the books that a group had been reading during the observation was based on sports. As the students flipped through the pages, before reading the book, they could see children in the book who were in wheel chairs and had walkers who were able to be active and play sports. This lets the students learn about children of all abilities. The children in the book were also of different races, which displays diversity. Along with displaying diversity, Ms. Tanonis has photos of all her previous students and her classes that she has

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taught over the years since 1998. The children and their families can grasp a sense of diversity on the wall as they enter the classroom. One element that could be implemented in this classroom that would be very beneficial to include would be a classroom library. Ms. Tanonis stated that the children enjoy their time in their reading groups, so providing the entire class with a library with all the books from the different reading levels would bring a lot more inclusion representation to the class, as the students would be able to explore the different topics of the books that they might not have ever seen before because they are not at a specific reading level. It would still be fine because the students would still be gaining a visual representation of diversity simply by looking at the pictures.

The outdoor area where the students play at recess is about a four -minute walk from classroom 603. The area is shared with the bilingual TK class and all six of the kindergarten classes, but not all at once. There are two different sections that recess times are divided into, each class receives two recesses; one in the morning and one in the afternoon giving the children 20 minutes to play during each recess. These two recesses do not include the 15-minute one that included during lunch time. When Ms. Tanonis' class goes outside to the area, there are three classes out there at the same time, generally being four teachers if they are there, among roughly 70 students if attendance is 100% for the day. There are five different sections that make up the outdoor area. Section one consists of a large playset that has one slide, a set of monkey bars, stairs, and a jungle gym toy structure, all on a soft green top turf. Section two has the swing structure which has a total of four swings. The third section is on the cement where students can ride the three red tricycles and enjoy the two large bouncy balls. The fourth section includes the grass section which serves as a free area for children to run, play tag, etc. The final section has one lunch table which is there for the students to eat their snack at. The fenced-in outdoor space isn't as spacious as it might sound or look when its empty, compared to when there are four classrooms occupying the space. This outdoor area does not support inclusion or for children of all abilities. In this entire space, there aren't any rails, ladders, or even ramps accessible for students who have physical disabilities. One major thing that stood out during this observation was the fact that the grass section continues around the main area, although it is still enclosed by the gate, it can pose a threat to the students because they may be out of an adult's eyesight. With this being observed, one recommendation is that each teacher could be assigned to their own section of the outdoor space, and ask their tutor(s) to keep an eye on the other section. That way all the five sections of the outdoor space is under adult supervision.

Space is a very important element in creating a positive classroom climate while promoting academic achievement. The physical layout of classroom 603 is very compacted which limits the students learning areas to either the carpet or their table desks. The opportunity for movement is restricted due to there being so many objects and the number of students in the classroom. Although the class does have lack of space, Ms. Tanonis does much of the group activities either on carpet or have the children go to their tables. The classroom is decorated

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with many different colorful colors and pieces of their artwork and assignments are displayed on the walls. This gives the students and their families an opportunity to look and reflect on the work that has been done through the year. The noise level is always a bit loud due to their being about 20-25 students in the class on a given day. The classroom space does not get much natural sunlight from the outside since the blinds are shut, so the teacher relies on the big fluorescent lights on the ceiling. The mood of the classroom does get louder and fast pace after the children come back from their first recess at about 10:05 am. I believe Ms. Tanonis does recognize that the classroom space effects class elements, but she just works with what she has. Whether the children are sitting in their squares on the carpet, or at their assigned seats at the table; Ms. Tanonis ensures that students are actively learning, participating, and are engaging. For example, the students are often asked to turn to their neighbor and have a conversation about the specific topic that they are discussing at that moment. This keeps most of the students engaged and motivated to share what they have discussed with their peer. When the children are at their tables is where things aren't as supported because Ms. Tanonis teaches from her desk, sometimes at a pace that doesn't work for all of the students. A recommendation could be to incorporate with seating chart being based off the different learning abilities that way if there is a peer falling a little behind, that their peer at the table could provide them with assistance. Or even having on the days that Ms. Tanonis has a tutor, she could have the tutor sit near the students that have been going at a slower pace. Some of the students may benefit from working in small groups, especially if they tend to work at a slower pace.

Ms. Tanonis supports children of all abilities the chance to actively learn, participate, and engage in her classroom mainly through some of the activities that are done throughout the day. She provides the students with opportunities to participate by pulling sticks that have the student's names on them. This is a fair way to make sure that the teacher isn't calling on the same few students constantly and a way for every student a chance to participate throughout the school year. The idea of using sticks to call on the students is a great, but maybe using the sticks throughout the entire day instead of at carpet time would allow even more participation for the students who might be a little shy or a chance to hear from those who don't raise their hands much. During the observation it was clear to see that Ms. Tanonis does not treat all of the students in the class equally whether that is by the tone of her voice or by supporting their individual needs, it doesn't happen. For example, there was a student who had come into the classroom in tears, crying after being separated from her mother. Ms. Tanonis immediately rushed to the student and invited her to eat breakfast with her. Ms. Tanonis catered to the student's emotions by taking the time to communicate with her. While on the other hand, another student had come into the classroom about five minutes before the other student. He had tears in his eyes and seemed to be a bit frustrated. Ms. Tanonis called the school counselor and the student was sent out of the classroom to speak with Mr. Chet. Instead of inviting this student to seat near her and eat, she removed him from the classroom. Looking at this situation it could have been equity vs. equality. This may have been what she thought he needed the

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best at the moment to control his feelings to cater to his needs. One way that Ms. Tanonis could change her behavior to better meet the needs of learners of all abilities is to create a morning circle during the first few minutes of school that can allow the students to share how they are feeling. Not only would this increase communication, but it would also let students know that their classroom is a safe place where their feelings are respected. Along with the morning circle, there could also be an emotions chart with all of the student's names and pictures on it so that the students have a space to write or draw how they are feeling.

The classroom curriculum is not very diverse at all on a day to day basis. The material is the same, the only thing that changes is the letter of the day/ number of the day. The students already know what to expect. The material does not support children of all abilities because they are TK students and Kindergarten students learning the same material. Some of the material could be advanced and be challenging for the TK students, but only some of the students are expected to complete the work. One recommendation of how the curriculum could be improved to better meet the needs of learners of all abilities is to set the standard for completing the work for all students is the same, that could mean that implementing a new curriculum may need to take place based on these student's needs and development. In the midst of making adjustments to the curriculum, Ms. Tanonis could switch up the routines and activities around so that the students become more interested and will allow them the opportunity to accept change. Another recommendation would be given the students the opportunity of teaching the class, instead of the teacher giving the answers. For example, during activities such as writing or math, Ms. Tanonis could call students up to the smart board to place their answer. This is a way for the students to actively engaged in their own learning process.

At Rosa Parks Elementary School there are ten school-wide rules which are: Follow directions from all adults, Use appropriate language, Keep your hands, feet and objects to yourself, Wear your school uniform, Walk at all times using designated paths, Ride bicycles to school only in 4th and 5th grades, Scooters, rollerblades and skateboards are not permitted, Be responsible for school materials issued to you, Follow all playground rules, and Electronic devices are not permitted on campus. These school-wide rules are displayed on a large poster in the administration office that serves as the main entry for students and families. The poster that lists the rules are in both English and Spanish language. Along with the rules, there is also three code of conduct rules that are integrated into each classroom, they are: "BE RESPECTFUL! BE RESPONSIBLE! BE SAFE!". The code of conduct is more known. Rosa Parks Elementary School's website is equipped with the policy manual/ parent handbook that covers information such as arrival/ pickup, visitors, dress code, behavioral policy, and other valuable information regarding their child's school. It is great that this information is not only given out to the families physically through take-home papers but also online as well. The major downside to this is the fact that the policy manual/parent handbook is only in two languages; English and Spanish. This is very surprising considering the fact that Rosa Parks Elementary School has over 800

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students in such a diverse community. There should be more copies made in more than two languages. The school should take a survey so that they can know which languages need to be incorporated when not only giving out these policy manual/ parent handbooks but more some any letters that are being sent home to the families. How can parents know the expectations and keep up with important information if they can't read the handbooks and letters because they do not speak the language?

Although the school-wide rules are supposed to be known by students and families, the classroom rules are not as unified. There are not any rules listed anywhere in the classroom, but the teacher is often heard saying the rules verbally, such as "keep your hands to yourself", "raise your hand", "if you need to go to the bathroom then write your name on the sheet before leaving", etc. I noticed that Ms. Tanonis would tend to only mention one of the rules out loud to the class after the rule had been ignored by a student. The rules could be further communicated if they were listed somewhere in the classroom, acting as a visual reminder for the five-year-old students. Another recommendation could be to start each day off with rule reminders, letting the students tell the teacher while reminding their peers around them. Again, lots of student engagement is one of the key elements to managing a classroom.

Ms. Tanonis has been teaching at Rosa Parks Elementary School since 1998. She expressed that through the years that the support the school had been providing her with was great and it allowed her to manage her classroom effectively. As of 2016, Rosa Parks received a new administration team, whom she feels that has made some major changes that are affecting her as a teacher, which ultimately affects the students and the families. Ever since the principal has given another role in addition to teaching her usual kindergarten class, she has not been trained how to navigate a TK classroom and curriculum. Ms. Tanonis explained that this is one of her most difficult years of teaching. She said "It is extremely hard dealing with the behaviors of the TK students who have never had any school experience before this year. I have no TK training and I have never had the chance to at least observe another TK classroom." Due to a lack of behavioral training with young students, this usually results in students being sent out of the classroom or being told to put their hands down at their table. A recommendation for Ms. Tanonis would be to invite the full administration team or one person from the team into her classroom for an entire day to observe some of the things that are happening so they have a chance to see things firsthand. After this I would recommend getting in contact with Mrs. Hedding; a TK teacher at Hardy Elementary School and one of the teachers whom help create the TK curriculum for the entire San Diego Unified School District, to see if she could observe her classroom for a day. These would be a starting point for Ms. Tanonis, hopefully before this year comes to an end that the administration team can provide not only Ms. Tanonis but all of the teachers and staff at the school with necessary training.

In the Classroom 603, the teacher has the school- monkey code of conduct "Follow the Tiger

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Way" posted on an 8x 11 bright green laminated poster. The bright color of the poster might bring attention to the families coming into the room, but the sign is not visible for the students because it is out of their eye level and they only use this area to put things in their homework folders at the end of the day. If Ms. Tanonis wants these rules to serve as her classroom rules, it would be a good idea to discuss what they are and move the poster to the front of the classroom where all of the students are able to see. As for room 603's classroom rules, they are not posted anywhere in the classroom, but Ms. Tanonis can always be heard stating the rules verbally. A suggestion would be to write on the rules on a poster chart and add pictures of what the students are supposed to be doing during a certain activity, rather than the poster listing things that the students shouldn't be doing. For example, one rule that Ms. Tanonis often reiterates is to sit crisscross applesauce on the carpet, so the rule on the chart for expectations on the carpet rug would be "Sit crisscross applesauce" and have a picture of the child doing exactly that.

In the classroom, there are two reinforcement systems that are used for every student. Ms. Tanonis gives students who are continuously following the rules a Rosa Parks "Tiger Ticket". These tickets are the same bright green color as the code of conduct rules poster. As mentioned before, the rules are not specific, but when a student earns one they place the ticket in a gold jar with their name on it. At the end of every month week, Ms. Tanonis is supposed to pick one ticket out. Whose ever tickets are pulled earns the opportunity to sit at the special Tiger Table during lunch. The Tiger Table is decorated with orange and blue decorations, has disco ball lights, and even a radio with the latest Kid Bop tunes playing. Only the top tigers from each class can sit at the special table. During my observation, three students were awarded Tiger Tickets for " raising their hand instead of shouting out, paying attention, and sitting crisscross applesauce on the carpet". Another reinforce system that is used for the entire class is earning stickers. Every student has a small "sticker book" that is at their table. If a student earns ten stickers during the week then Ms. Tanonis will allow them to pick a prize from the treasure box. During clean up time Ms. Tanonis gave stickers to the first table who had their things put away quietly and hands placed on the table. Although the other tables didn't receive stickers, Ms. Tanonis still praised the entire class for cleaning up, "Wow, even though green table won this round, you all did a good job with cleanup so give yourselves a pat on the back." This reinforcement is more classroom directed, the idea of the Tiger Tickets is a school-wide reinforcement system.

In classroom 603, feeling identification and expression are not as supported by the teacher, curriculum, or the materials as they could be in the classroom for students. During the observation, there was one instance that could have been handled differently, by providing that student with other ways to express their emotions. The instance happened after lunch recess. A student had come into the classroom crying loudly. Ms. Tanonis asked the student what was wrong, but the student continued crying without speaking to her. The student was unresponsive,

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just crying for a few minutes when Ms. Tanonis raised her voice slightly and said: "If you aren't going to tell me what's wrong, then stop crying!" This situation could have been handled differently by providing the student with a space to take a break and give different alternatives to saying his feelings out loud vocally because perhaps the student wasn't comfortable enough to speak at the time. There is a space in the back of the classroom that closed off to the children which are the dramatic play area, maybe reconstructing that area into an area where students can go to relax would be impactful. Since I had only observed one instance during my observation in the classroom I can provide a suggestion for Ms. Tanonis that involves the entire class. I'm sure that many of her students may have experienced or will express a situation where they are upset, mad, etc. and can't find the words to express what they are exactly feeling. A class activity such as the "Feelings Toss" where there are 4 different faced emotions and the teacher shows the students a picture of someone/ and reads the scenario, and the students must determine the emotion that they think the picture fits by tossing a bean bag in the correct bucket. This activity is one that would be a good introductory to learning the four main feelings: Happy, Sad, Mad, Scared. The activity would be fun and could increase dialogue among the students and their peers, all while learning about emotions.

The parent involvement within the classroom is very limited. A lot of the parents drop their child off in the morning and wait outside of the classroom to pick them up after the bell rings, ending school. Every student in Ms. Tanonis' classroom has their own mailbox where their folders go. The folders are usually filled with important information, completed assignments and artwork, and daily homework pages. The parents and the students are to take the folders home daily and send them back the next day. Even though the parents should come directly to the student's class for pickup, a lot of parents wait outside of the classroom and let their children come out to find them. This could be a reason that many of the folders are left untouched or even left in the mailboxes for days at a time. A few suggestions on how teachers can engage with parents is one, inviting the parents into the classroom for the first five minutes of the day and the last five minutes of the day for pick up. This would hopefully be a start to opening the communication among the parents and teacher. Creating a weekly or even monthly calendar of important dates and events and what the class is currently learning would allow the parents to keep updated on what their child is doing at school.

When it comes to the teacher's engagement with families around behavioral difficulties and successes she goes through phone calls. Now, this can sometimes be hard to connect with certain families due to there being a language barrier. Instead of making phone calls Ms. Tanonis could send home weekly reports on each child's behaviors whether it is difficulties or successes. It is important for a parent/ family to hear about the behaviors of their child while at school.

Rosa Parks Elementary School has their code of conduct roles posted in each classroom

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throughout the school. The school does have its own matrix with the behavioral expectation categories being Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe. Being respectful means to treat a person, place, things, and nature politely and kindly. To be responsible means doing your share of work and owning your words and actions. And to be safe is acting in ways that keep you and others from harm. The three expectations are defined for the school's walkways, lunchtime, restrooms, recess, school assemblies, and before/ afterschool. These specific expectations and rules of the Matrix are discussed further in detail in the appendix. The rules displayed by the school are developmentally suitable for the students at the school, including the younger TK students.

During my observation in classroom 603, there were two students who displayed difficult behaviors. The Functional Behavioral Assessments for both students is located in Appendix B and C. The behavior hypothesis for student 1; CP is: During carpet rug time, CP has frequent outbursts, when he is redirected to raise his hands and sit down quietly when disrupting the classroom. When he does not get called on by the teacher, CP will engage in the maladaptive behavior of leaving the classroom. CP's behaviors are maintained when denied access to attention. When this behavior appears, it is likely that the teacher lets him leave the classroom freely, which reinforces the behavior of escaping. The behavior hypothesis for student 2; IS is: During classwork time IS tends to not want to complete his assignment with the rest of the class. At times IS will refuse to do any work by saying "I don't want to do this/ I won't do this" loudly while interrupting the teacher's lesson plan. When this behavior occurs, the teacher lets him do whatever the activity is that will keep him quiet and away from the students who are learning. It appears that IS engages in this behavior to escape doing his class work while being reinforced with activities that he prefers.

An appropriate replacement behavior for CP for seeking attention from the teacher would be to teach him how to raise his hand without saying the answer out loud. Another potential replacement behavior is to seat CP near the teacher. As observed in the classroom when CP raised his hand, the teacher ignored that appropriate behavior and reinforced another student while ignoring CP. This led to CP engaging in the alternative behavior of speaking out of turn. If the replacement behavior is going to be introduced, then the teacher's behavior needs to be altered by reinforcing the appropriate behaviors at all times. For example, the teacher could reinforce this behavior by actually calling on the student and recognizing his positive behavior so that it will continue in the future. To teach the equivalent replacement behavior while using a primary support a poster with a picture of a child sitting quietly raising his hand could be implemented class-wide. Before starting an activity on the carpet, the teacher could start off by reminding the students what to do if they would like to speak and simply point to the poster so the students can have a visual cue rule board. The challenging behavior can be made less effective by reducing the amount of attention he is receiving from the teacher. The teacher must make sure she is following through with reinforcing this replacement behavior, which will mean

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that every time CP raises his hand, he receives some sort of attention.

For IS an appropriate replacement behavior for escaping his classwork could be providing him with words and a visual card to request a break when needed. For example, teaching IS to ask "Can I do my math work after recess?" or "Can I take a break before I begin my math work?" The challenging behavior could be reduced by assuring that IS completes his math work whether demonstrates the challenging behavior or appropriate requests a break. A primary level support could be to introduce classroom "Break Cards" that would allow each student to postpone an activity or assignment for a later time in the day. Allowing one "break card" prior to lunch and one after per student. This intervention would ensure that the function of the behavior of escaping is maintained by the appropriate behaviors while eliminated any challenging behaviors.

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