

ED590 Communication
Capstone
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“Communication is the medium for instruction, assessment, interpersonal relationships, group interactions, parent and community relations and counseling.” (Cross Cultural Communication) Because of it’s key role in education, good communication skills are vital to be a successful educator as well as a successful student. In the following two dialogs, I have used effective communication skills as a tool for conflict resolution and peer coaching in my technology classroom.

Act I – Conflict Resolution

As a reward system, students in the Tech class are allowed to participate in a class wide chat system on the computer. One day in class, I discovered two students calling each other inappropriate names on the chat room. In the following dialog, I addressed this situation with conflict resolution strategies that I learned through staff training at my school. To avoid calling the classes attention to the matter, I walked up to each student and quietly asked them to come see me at my desk. Fortunately, both students complied without a scene.

Me: Kelly, Maurice, what seems to be the problem on the chat room?

M.: Nothing.

K.: Maurice said I was fat.

M.: You told everyone that I smelled bad.

Me: I hear that both of you are feeling frustrated so I would like both of you to take 5 minutes and cool off. I need you to think about how you feel when someone writes something bad about you on the chat room.

(5 minutes later)

Me: I am going to give each of you a turn to talk and I would like for you to listen to each other. Please remember the conflict resolution rules of the school. Number 1, treat each other with respect. Number 2, no interrupting. Number 3, work constructively to solve the problem and Number 4, always tell the truth. OK, Maurice, I would like you to tell Kelly how you felt when you read her message about you that was posted.

M.: It sucks when you tell other people that I smell bad.

Me: Why Maurice?

M.: Because people are laughing at me.

Me: Maurice, I appreciate you being calm and Kelly, thank you for not interrupting and listening to how he felt. Now would you like to tell Maurice how you felt when you read his chat room comment.

K.: Maurice, it's really mean and it really hurts my feelings when you called me fat because I have been getting teased about this for a long time.

Me: I like the way you both are conveying your feelings. I need to tell you what my feelings are when I see inappropriate comments on the chat room. I feel frustrated when people make comments like that especially when the whole class can read them. The next step is to find out what we need in order for us to be respectful to each other in the class chat room.

M.: Maybe we should have a rule about no name calling when we have chat time.

Me: Kelly, do you have any suggestions?

K.: Yeah, I don't think you should say things that could hurt someone's feelings.

Me: Sounds to me like you both are looking for the same thing. You've made me realize that we don't have any rules posted about our chat room time. Would both of you be willing to work together to make a poster with the chat room rules on it?

Summary

"In our classroom, there are three principles which guide us in our work together: maintaining dignity, honoring diversity, and democracy." (Brodhagen) I agree with Barbara Brodhagen that these three principles maintain a positive classroom environment. I believe that my dialog above is respectful toward students and teaches conflict resolution strategies in a constructive way. By calling the students over quietly, I did not draw attention to the situation. Having each student have a cool off time to think about the comments made and how they felt about them is a critical element in conflict resolution. I then reminded the two students of the conflict resolution rules that each classroom has posted in their room. These two students were able to express how they felt about the chat room comments and brainstorm ideas on how to resolve their conflict. The students acquired a sense of ownership in the new chat room rules for the class and eventually were helpful in modeling appropriate chat room behavior.

Act II – Peer Coaching

Two students are finished with a class assignment and want to work on a PowerPoint presentation for extra credit. One of the students who is shy is experienced with PowerPoint while the other, who is willing to learn, has not yet used the program. My goal is to have the experienced student teach the other student how to properly use PowerPoint. "Communication is culture bound. The way an individual communicates emanates from his or her culture." (Cross Cultural Communication) Each of these students have developed a particular communication style based on their cultural experiences. My goal as a teacher is to help them develop skills in communicating effectively with all types of communicators.

Me: Frank, Lauren... for your extra credit project, I would like for you to do a PowerPoint presentation on U.S. Presidents.

Frank: But I don't know anything about PowerPoint.

Me: Lauren, you know a lot about PowerPoint.

Lauren: I guess so.

Me: What about that really cool project you worked on last month?

Lauren: Yeah, so.

Me: Didn't you feel great about how you learned how to use PowerPoint?

Lauren: Yeah.

Me: I've been noticing that other students are coming to you to ask for help. Would you be willing to teach Frank a little of what you know?

Lauren: Sure, OK. Sounds fun.

Me: Frank, would you be willing to have Lauren teach you how to use it?

Frank: Sure. OK.

Me: And I know you can contribute a lot about the Presidents. I look forward to seeing how you two work together on this presentation. If you have any questions, let me know.

Summary

“Culturally and communicatively diverse students, in turn, may respond with low self concepts and low academic achievement to a school climate they perceive as hostile.” (Cross Cultural Communication) By developing a classroom environment that is supportive to culturally diverse students, I have helped each student feel confident and successful in a cooperative environment. By teaming these two particular students together in a peer-coaching situation, I feel that I am being sensitive to each student's diverse style of communication. I agree with Martin Moore when he says, “one of the first things you must do is show you care about the students as individuals.” (Moore) Lauren was able to communicate effectively to Frank about how to run PowerPoint because of her familiarity with this program. Frank, who is a very outgoing student, and who usually takes leadership roles, learned to appreciate the value in taking directions from others, especially his peers.

REFERENCES

Brodhagen, Barbara. Using Democracy in the Classroom. 1996.

Cross Cultural Communication, Chapter 1 – Introduction.

Moore, Martin. Winning Ways: Teachers talk about building rapport with students – 3 perspectives.