Responsibility, Respect and Relationships

Sample Lesson

Study Teams and Group Activities

If you register as an individual, ask a colleague or spouse to participate with you in discussion assignments. If that is not possible, use group activities for your own personal reflection.

Application Assignments and Access to a Classroom

If you are an administrator, counselor, or do not currently have access to a classroom, instead of reporting on implementation of application assignments describe how you plan to use the course concepts in your environment.

Session #1
Emotional Safety in Today's Schools

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By watching Video Program #1 and completing this session's learning activities, you will:

- Examine the difference between physical and emotional safety.
- Assess degree to which your teaching situation is providing your students with emotional safety.
- Analyze your current approach to emotional safety and identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Establish a course goal to improve the level of emotional safety in your teaching situation.

READING ASSIGNMENT:

Please read chapter 1 in the course text "Creating Emotionally Safe Schools."

PREPARATION:

In order to focus your thinking as you begin this session, please complete the following Emotional Safety Survey. This survey lists a number of practices that characterize an emotionally safe climate. It has been included to help you evaluate your goals, policies and intentions, as well as the degree to which each exists in actual practice. The list is deliberately idealistic and comprehensive. Studies suggest that each item is an important component of an emotionally safe environment, and that emotional safety is built on a combination of all of the characteristics listed in this survey. As you strive to achieve the specific behaviors each item suggests, you will no doubt see improvements in the culture of your class-room, as well as in the performance, commitment, behavior and interactions that occur within its walls. Likewise, as you increase the agreement with each of the items in this survey, you can expect a reduction of stress commonly associated with failure, rebelliousness, disruptive-ness and passive student behavior.

This survey will help you to evaluate the degree to which you are committed to each item in terms of your philosophy or vision, as well as the degree to which the behaviors described in each item regularly occur in actual practice.

Use the following scale to rate each item:

1- Strongly committed
2- Somewhat committed
3- Somewhat uncommitted
4- Strongly uncommitted

Need for Meaningful Outcomes (Positive Consequences), Structure, Boundaries (Limits) and Follow-Through

___ I make a deliberate effort to anticipate what students and teachers (and parents) will need in various situations in order to prevent problems from occurring.
___ I have and communicate boundaries and policies that clearly describe desirable and acceptable student behaviors.
___ My classroom environment is reward oriented (as opposed to being punishment oriented). Rules and boundaries emphasize the positive consequences of cooperation and compliance.
___ My goal is to motivate through access to positive outcomes, rather than through avoidance or fear of negative outcomes.
___ I attempt to motivate students with the promise of a positive outcome, rather than using the promise of punishment.
___ I attempt to follow through consistently, withholding (or withdrawing) positive outcomes until students follow through on what is required on their end.
___ I am committed to avoiding warnings, threats, meaningless or delayed (negative) consequences.
___ I make students and their parents aware, as soon as possible, of changes in behavior or performance that could affect grades, promotion or graduation.
___ I communicate with parents on a regular basis about what their kids are doing well.

Need for Respect, Belonging and Dignity

___ I attempt to avoid equating students' worth with their behavior or achievement.
___ I attempt to avoid humiliation, shaming, sarcasm, ridicule or other forms of attack in regard to students' personality, achievement or behavior.
___ I attempt to avoid depending on negative adult reactions (anger, punishment, disappointment) in order to motivate students (or control their behavior).
___ I recognize that students have a need to experience meaningful positive outcomes, just as adults do.
___ I treat my students with the same respect I want them to show one another and me.
___ I recognize that my students have a need for dignity, purpose, success, impact (seeing outcomes of choices and behaviors), acceptance, belonging, attention, structure, power and fun, among other things.
___ I encourage students to have and voice their own thoughts and opinions.
___ I encourage students to speak up for their own instructional needs (for example, more help, additional information or resources, clarification, other learning needs).
___ I encourage inquiry and debate, and attempt to avoid negatively reacting to students who challenge or disagree with adults (although I do ask students to pre-sent their positions respectfully).
___ I attempt to adhere to the same standards of behavior (including language and tone of voice) that I expect or require from our students.
___ I regard and use a students' mistakes simply as opportunities for new learning.
___ I avoid responding with impatience, anger or disappointment to a student who is having difficulty under-standing or mastering a new concept or performing a new skill.
___ I respect students' affective needs and am committed to listening and sup-porting their feelings in positive ways.
___ I work to eliminate prejudices to-ward students based on their racial or cultural background, physical appearance; academic, artistic or athletic competence; sexual orientation; family history; prior achievement or performance.
___ I avoid gossiping about students or their families.
___ I strive to stay aware of put-downs expressed by students or staff, especially those that involve the use of slurs or derogatory names or remarks.

___ We regard—and use— students' mistakes simply as opportunities for new learning.
___ We avoid responding with impatience, anger or disappointment to a student who is having difficulty under-standing or mastering a new concept or performing a new skill.
___ We respect students' affective needs and are committed to listening and supporting their feelings in positive ways.
___ We work to eliminate prejudices toward students based on their racial or cultural background, physical appearance; academic, artistic or athletic competence; sexual orientation; family history; prior achievement or performance.
___ We avoid gossiping about students or their families.
___ We strive to stay aware of put-downs expressed by students or staff, especially those that involve the use of slurs or derogatory names or remarks.
___ We respond immediately to put-downs, slurs and derogatory names or remarks (rather than ignoring or excusing them).

Need for Autonomy (Power and Control)

___ We accept the importance of students learning decision-making and self-management skills.
___ We encourage students to set goals and evaluate options in order to take responsibility for solving their own problems, rather than "rescuing" them or telling them what they should do.
___ We allow students to self-manage with regard to materials and resources.
___ We encourage students to self-manage their personal needs within clearly stated boundaries (ex: drinking water or using the rest rooms as needed)
___ We allow and encourage students to have input in and make decisions about their learning (topics, presentation, media, sequence, assignments, need for additional practice, readiness for the next skill or topic, etc.)
___ We allow and encourage students to have input in and make decisions about how, where and with whom they work.
___ We hold students accountable for their behavioral choices without blaming, shaming, attacking or punishing (ex: withholding positive outcome, privileges, credit for work due)
___ Students are encouraged to initiate and take risks regarding their own learn-ing.
___ We allow and encourage students to create, design, request or renegotiate projects and assignments to make them personally meaningful and relevant.

Need for Recognition, Attention and Emotional Safety

___ We attempt to recognize positive behavior with statements that emphasize a positive outcome or meaningful benefit to the students, rather than using statements that emphasize the students' worth ("goodness"), our happiness or pleasure, or the students' ability to please us.
___ We attempt to reinforce positive behavior by allowing positive outcomes to occur continue or become available, contingent, for example, on work completion or non-disruptive behavior.
___ We attempt to meet students' needs for attention in positive, constructive and proactive ways in order to diminish the tendency for them to act out to get these needs met.
___ We strive to stay aware of changes in patterns in students' behavior and to maintain a sense of how students are doing (that is, not just focusing on their academic performance).
___ We attempt to create emotional safety by noticing and supporting students in crisis.
___ We provide appropriate outlets for students in crisis.
___ Our students know that if they need to talk, we are willing to listen (or set a time when we can listen, or refer them to someone who can listen).

___ We respect students' needs for confidentiality to the degree that doing so will not put that student or anyone else in danger.
___ We strive to maintain awareness of how students treat one another.
___ We immediately respond to incidents we witness that involve any form of bullying, harassment or threat to a student's safety.

Need for Options as a Learner (Individuality*)*

___ We attempt to determine what interests and motivates our students and use this information in our planning and instruction.
___ We attempt to identify various aspects of our students' individual learning needs (such as learning styles, modality preferences, dominance profiles, temperament or personality profiles), and use this information in our planning and instruction.
___ We attempt to identify various types of intelligences (linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, naturalistic, interpersonal and intrapersonal) and use this information to capitalize and build on students' strengths.
___ We provide resources and activities to accommodate a variety of intelligences in each class.
___ We attempt to accommodate a variety of modality strengths (visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic preferences) in our directions and activities.
___ We attempt to accommodate a variety of learning style and preferences in our instruction and assignments.
___ We recognize and attempt to accommodate the needs of tactile and kinesthetic learners (as well as high visual, verbal and auditory learners).
___ We acknowledge and appreciate the fact that some students may pay attention without sitting up straight and making continual eye contact.
___ We make sure kids have ample opportunities to move during the day.
___ We teach children ways to self-regulate (maintain appropriate alertness for the particular class or activity) without disrupting others.
___ We attempt to accommodate a variety of learning preferences by offering choices, particularly during independent work time (ex: seating or location in room, affiliation, music or sound, in-take, etc.)
___ We offer a variety of assessment tools to allow students to demonstrate mastery in ways besides paper-and-pencil tests.

Need for Success (Academic, Social, Intrapersonal)

___ We assess student ability before beginning instruction or assigning tasks.
___ We attempt to accept students exactly the way they come to us, build on what they know, and encourage growth from wherever they start.
___ We attempt to provide opportunities for success for each child in the school, even if he or she is far behind curricular expectations.
___ We attempt to match instruction and assignments to individual student needs according to their current skill or mastery levels or prior experience.
___ We have adopted the belief that the primary purpose of evaluating a student's work is to determine what type of instruction or resources that particular student needs next.
___ We invite and consider student in-put and self-assessment when assigning placement, follow-up work or grades.
___ If a student fails to master a concept or skill, we see our role as that of improving understanding, rather than simply evaluating their performance be-fore moving on to the next concept.

___ We encourage students to use our feedback to improve their work and re-submit (for a higher grade, for example, or until they get it right).
___ We attempt to build interpersonal skills such as communication skills, respect, tolerance, compassion, resistance to teasing and peer pressure, and other positive social behaviors.
___ We attempt to build intrapersonal (character) skills such as persistence, responsibility, honesty, integrity, as well as confidence, the ability to stick up for one-self, problem-solving skills and resistance to failure, defeatism or victim thinking.

CONCLUDING ACTIVITY

After you have completed your survey, analyze the results and list the areas of greatest strengths and the areas in most need of improvement. Be prepared to discuss your analysis with your study team in the next session.

PROGRESS REPORTING

To conclude your learning activities for this session, please turn to the Progress Report form for Session #1. Progress Report forms for all sessions are placed together at the back of this Course of Study book for easy removal and evaluation.

Session Notes: