Title

Creating a classroom code of conduct

Short description

Procedure for formulating a code of conduct in the classroom.

Detailed description of the tool and required materials, attachments

How can you create rules which work with students "who don't want to be told what to do" and feel that "rules are meant to be broken"?
Here is a suggestion.

You can help establish a "Classroom Code of Conduct" and create a feeling of "This is the way we do things around here" by using the following process.

Tell the students that you think they are probably old enough to know how to act, and that, instead of rules, you want to talk with them about how THEY want to be treated in the classroom.

I've discovered that it is far easier to be successful when talking about values with *at-risk students* if you start the discussion with how they want others to treat them. Have them take out a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle, making two columns. Ask them to write a list in the first column of all the ways they want to make sure that they are not treated this year. Have them think back to other years and recall ways they or others have been treated that they didn't like. Then in column 2 have them write a list of all the ways they want to make sure they are treated this year. (Give them examples if necessary.)

Have them turn in their lists at the end of class. Say that you'll be taking them home to collate them and look for common themes. Undoubtedly, most (if not all!) will say they want to be treated with RESPECT, and there will be other similarities. Review these most popular themes with the students the next day, leading and guiding the discussion with the goal of establishing the "Classroom Code of Conduct."

One class, with the teacher's help, ended up with three main values, expressed in three words: BELONG – RESPECT - WORK.

One school created THE THREE B's: BE HERE — BEHAVE — BE LEARNING.

Another class listed four values: (1) Respect others; (2) Appreciate diversity; (3) Conduct yourself with honor; (4) Do your best work.

I would guide the discussion further so that two additional values could be added: (5) Be your best self; and (6) Believe in yourself! With students who take pride in their ability to break rules, this process of exploring classroom values works much better than listing lots of rules! If you have too many rules, you will always have someone breaking them, which puts you into a reactive position. Instead you can help students interpret values, make agreements, and learn procedures. This allows you to teach instead of enforce. And, classroom problem-solving can become an outgrowth of having the class develop a classroom code of conduct using this process. You can hold class meetings to solve problems. This will help your students feel they belong and are a part of something. Your next assignment can be to have your students either write a theme or draw a poster illustrating either one or all of the values you agreed upon. (Most at-risk students will choose the poster!) Then you can post them for all to see, which will give you something to point to as a "gentle reminder" when students forget!

User's guide, equipment

Equipment	Quantity
Pencil	
Sheet of paper	

Level of difficulty (easy, medium, advanced)

easy

Tags

intervention on teacher level, classroom behaviour, classroom management

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