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Learning Together ... How To



In this special mini-issue: (A full issue returns in June)

Learning Together-How To

On Ethics... The Curriculum Under The Curriculum

About our cover: Melissa and Darcy learning together

On Ethics...The Curriculum Under the Curriculum

-Carol Gray

Some of you may recall this incident reported in an earlier issue this year. At Worden Seating, I was asked about a student and answered in front of the student. The result was an immediate regression in the behavior of the student. A concerned employee mentioned this to Mr. Dan Chambers, manager of Worden Seating, who in turn spoke with me. My response was a letter to the Worden Seating employees, thanking them for their concern and making a promise to develop a standard of ethics to prevent ANY like incidences in the future.

In the following months, getting ethics onto paper was an elusive undertaking. Certainly, we hoped, it wasn't that we didn't HAVE any ethics...it was figuring out what exactly they were and placing them all in the same place that seemed difficult. Finally, with a first rough draft established, the ethics were distributed to staff of the secondary LSI program, as well as to Worden Seating. With the resulting feedback, a second rough draft was written and distributed, this time also to parents at a chapter meeting. Those comments were again incorporated.

In every <u>Morning News</u> since the original incident at Worden Seating was described, I have promised the ethics would be soon completed. No longer a promise but a reality, the standard of ethics for the transition grant project are attached to this newsletter.

What is most important, and most surprising, is their impact. There were those who made fun of the fact that there were ten... "just like the ten commandments, right?" I assure everyone there was no conclous attempt to have TEN ethics. "The big difference between the ten commandments and the ethics is: I KNOW I can stick to the ethics!" All kidding aside, their effect on how I teach has been a tremendous, serious, learning experience.

Suddenly, there's so much to share with the students with ADAPTED explanations and materials. For instance, demonstrating why and how we take data. In explaining "on and off" task data to one student, he became concerned about the "off" task checks he had received. I explained he was always checking his watch at those times. He indicated that "off checks" were a problem. In asking what HE wanted to do about the problem, he said, "Put my watch on the table." Now, this student works with his watch on the table, where he can glance at it without breaking strike in his work. Problem solved. No more "off" checks. While the skill coach and I had a meeting scheduled to brainstorm ideas to tackle the off-task behavior of this student, the solution the student provided on his own rendered our meeting very short.

As a result of the ethics, the students have begun to tell ME what to do. One student has requested that I help him put "more

complete sentences in me." They come into my office and INITIATE, appropriately, about what we should talk about...or work on. In remembering all the adaptations and considerations required by the ethics, I have come to know the students in a whole new way.

These are more than ethics. They are an attitude reminding me to take time to wait through the students' mistakes, allowing them the dignity of recognizing their own problems and arriving, when possible, at their own solutions. It is a reminder to ask permission from the students to be observed in the training sites by visitors. All activities are explained, and materials are developed to assist in the explanation. Participation with understanding is a special freedom. The ethics are a "curriculum" that reminds me to encourage and allow the learning between the structured activities.

Certainly the ethics find me catching myself on mistakes of the past. OOPS! An employee at Worden Seating brought one mistake to my attention, and by involving several people and incorporating ideas ...we found a solution. What we have learned, how it has changed our approach, is ours forever. The ethics guarantee the same opportunity for our students. Nothing like a written guarantee.

Learning Together: How To

People often comment that in this newsletter it sometimes seems we are addressing professionals...at other times, parents. That is an accurate observation, since this newsletter is distributed to both parents and professionals. It's a fine line for an editor to walk. With an article such as this, however, we're addressing everyone.

An exciting educational concept has captured the attention of many parents, educators, and professionals. It has directly influenced the lives of many students across the country. At Jenison High School, the concept has directly affected 10% of the entire student body this year alone. Known by many names, among them "supported education", "integration", and "inclusive education"- it refers to the placement of handicapped students in the regular classroom, most often with support, to socially integrate and learn among non-handicapped, age appropriate peers.

This year, we have had three students placed in three different regular education classes: Theatre I, Individualized Writing, and Clothing and Textiles. The results have been fantastic...and we are busy documenting student successes and concerns so we can improve our support to our students and their regular education teachers in the future.

It's a draw on who is learning more, our students or our staff. There are some things we feel, but can't as yet prove. Others we were surprised to learn. Some we have listed here.

Osmosis. Some people feel that if you place handicapped