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MINI-MANUAL

Community Building: Witness to the Good



INSTRUCTIONAL
COACHING
GROUP

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For more detailed information regarding the information contained in this mini-manual, refer to:

High Impact Instruction: A Framework for Great Teaching

Chapter 14

By Jim Knight

Also view the High Impact Instruction introduction video:



Community Building: Witness to the Good

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Expectations

“We do not believe in ourselves until someone reveals that deep inside us something is valuable, worth listening to, worthy of our trust, sacred to our touch. Once we believe in ourselves we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight or any experience that reveals the human spirit.”

E.E. CUMMINGS

“The simple act of paying positive attention to people has a great deal to do with productivity.”

TOM PETERS

KEY CONCEPTS FOR COACHES

HOW TEACHERS CAN BE A WITNESS TO THE GOOD

- 1 Create an awareness of all classroom activities and transitions and think carefully about associated expectations of behavior.
- 2 Write down and teach expectations for every situation.
- 3 Remember that rules and norms suggest behavior that occurs in every situation. High Impact expectations teach students how to act, talk and move during all activities and transitions.
- 4 Know that students may be more committed to the expectations if they are involved in the creation of them.

Turning Ideas Into Action

STUDENTS

- 1 Consider giving students a survey so that you can learn about things that interest them.
- 2 Review surveys carefully and have 1:1 conversations about their unique interests.
- 3 Give students meaningful activities and assignments that empower them to be witnesses to the good.
- 4 Consider giving students an assignment to try out a positive intervention in their school or at home and report on what they found.

TEACHERS

- 1 Find a way to get a clear picture of your ratios of interaction (positive comments versus negative or correcting comments). You can use video recording and assess your own or have another teacher or coach track them for you.
- 2 Once you know your current reality, set a goal to increase your ratio to 3:1 or more.
- 3 Consult the list of strategies for increasing positive attention.
- 4 Keep recording your class to monitor your progress.
- 5 Consider gathering data to assess if disruptions go down as positive attention increases. (Research suggests that it does so.)

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

- 1 Practice observing teachers until you are extremely consistent with observations.
- 2 Study the list of ways to increase positive attention. Collect additional ideas.
- 3 Coach teachers by gathering data, setting goals, video recording the class, modeling practices, and collaborating to identify ways to increase the positive half of ratios of interaction.

PRINCIPALS

- 1 Guide schoolwide discussion about ratios of interaction and consider establishing a goal for the school.
- 2 Conduct walk-throughs where the goal is to collect data about ratios in the school.
- 3 Consider leading a book study to foster dialogue around the importance of a positive learning environment.
- 4 Monitor your own interactions to make sure you are walking the talk by being a witness to the good done by the people you encounter.

What It Looks Like



Understanding that “attention” refers to anything a teacher says or does that indicates she is attentive to a student’s behavior clearly allows adults to measure positive interaction with students. Ratios of interaction can be monitored. When teachers understand the power of positive attention, disruptive behavior decreases.

HOW TO SCORE RATIO OF INTERACTION

When you are gathering ratio-of-interaction data, you are observing how often teachers reinforce students for appropriate behavior and how often teachers correct students for inappropriate behavior. As a general rule, we suggest that teachers pay five times as much attention to appropriate behavior as they do to inappropriate behavior.

Ratio of interaction is not a measure of a teacher’s niceness. Rather, it is a measure of how a teacher directs her attention. Indeed, even if a teacher speaks very positively while attending to a student who is acting inappropriately, that teacher’s action must still be recorded as a correction because the student is getting attention because the student is acting in ways counter-productive to learning.

What It Looks Like

Attention to appropriate behavior can be expressed verbally or nonverbally and can be directed to an entire class or an individual student. Teachers' verbal attention to students is usually perceived with a teacher calling attention to what is going well.

Some examples of **verbal** positive attention include the following:

- "Your effort on this assignment really paid off."
- "The way you're paying attention is going to help you learn."
- "This is what I'm talking about, class; this is the way a great team learns together."
- "Thank you for getting ready so quickly."
- "Keep it up. This is the way winners behave."

Some examples of **nonverbal** positive attention include the following:

- Thumbs up
- Nodding yes
- Smiling in the direction of someone receiving your attention
- High-fiving a student

Some examples of **verbal** negative attention include the following:

- "You need to get working."
- "What are you supposed to be doing now?"
- "John, that's not acceptable."
- "In this class, we raise our hands before talking."
- "Eyes up here."

Some examples of **nonverbal** negative attention include the following:

- Moving over to be close to a student who is off task (proximity control)
- Staring at a student until they stop the inappropriate behavior (the evil eye)
- Frowning at a student
- Taking a student's book out and pointing to the task the student should be doing

INCREASING POSITIVE INTERACTIONS

- Commit to saying hello to every student as he or she enters the classroom (put special emphasis on kids with whom you may have had a recent negative interaction).
- Seek out positive (appropriate) interactions that are not contingent on behavior.
- Find the little things that make kids tick (activity, team, interest, etc.) and talk about them with them.
- Catch the good behavior by drawing attention to it (thanking students, commenting, etc.).
- Focus praise or attention on effort rather than attributes (talk about a student's hard work rather than a student's intelligence).
- Pay attention to academic and behavioral opportunities for praise.
- Post reminders to praise (sticky note to yourself on the Elmo poster in the class, on your lesson plans).
- Set specific praise goals (today every student who gets the book out will be praised).
- Set goals based on irrelevant prompts (every time a teacher enters my room, I'll praise three kids).
- Double up on praise by naming all students who are doing something appropriate (Michelle, Lea, Susan, and Jenny, thanks for getting your book out so quickly).
- Vary methods of praise.
- Call (or email) the parents of children who are doing well.
- Send home postcards to parents to praise kids.
- Prominently display student work in the classroom.
- Ignore minor misbehavior if the behavior is attention seeking.

RATIO OF INTERACTION

REINFORCING	CORRECTING