

October, 2005 Newsletter

From: Carol Fuery www.carolfuery.com

Dear Educator,

Here are 9 powerful communication techniques to help you connect with your students. These suggestions come from the new *Winning Year One (k-12) A Survival Guide for First Year Teachers*. If you like these tips, log-on to www.carolfuery.com and get our *Winning Year One* for just \$12.75.

Biologist Lewis Thomas wrote that nature's great law of all living things is not the survival of the fittest, but the principle of cooperation. He explains that plants and animals survive not by defeating their neighbors in the competition for food and light but by learning to live with their neighbors in such a way that all prosper.

Connecting and communicating with students means that we're given a chance to teach. The following nine techniques may help you with your special clients, your students.

1. Use "I Messages "

"I messages" help to get your point across without making students feel defensive. Here's an example:

"... I feel...when you ... because..."

I feel X	a feeling, not an opinion
When you Y	observable behavior
Because Z	an observable consequence

This structure:

Describes, labels and avoids teacher talk.
Let the student know consequences of his/her behavior.
Brings emotions into the open.

For example: "Bryan, I feel angry when you pull your jacket over your head and sleep in my third hour class . Because you're missing the lesson, you may not pass Thursday's test."

"Connie, I feel uncomfortable when you punch your teammate because his crying upsets others."

2. Use small talk.

Small talk or casual conversation helps you connect with students in a positive way. It creates emotional involvement; it shows kids you care about them and helps establish and maintain the teacher- student relationship. Before class, during lunch, after school are good times to catch a few minutes of conversation.

During the first week of school, have students fill out a Student Information Sheet. (See Appendix A). Beside each student's name in the gradebook jot down the home telephone and work numbers. Add one or two words that might ignite a conversation between you and the student.

Notations by a student's name might look like this:

William Ramsey (Bill) 472-0699 (H) 482-3457(W) volleyball, 3 sisters
Alice Cook 481-3322 (H) youngest of 4, part-time waitress, 2 labs"

When you catch that free minute or two, your conversation becomes easy.

3. Invite kids to talk about feelings.

First, respond to feelings, then to facts. When a student is angry, frightened or frustrated saying, "Calm down, calm down!" doesn't work. Say instead:

"You seem quite upset."

"Someone must have done something awful to get you this excited."

"Want to talk about what's bothering you?"

4. Try the Sweet and Sour Approach.

When you need to criticize a student, give three plusses then the minus. Express three sincere compliments before your first negative comment. The compliments get the student's attention and makes him/her more willing to listen to what you have to say. Such as:

"Mary, I really enjoy your energy, enthusiasm and willingness to share. However, yesterday your constant talking disrupting our lesson. Is there anyway you might be able to behave differently today?"

5. Always provide face-saving comments.

Adults as well as children need a way to save face. You can do it using phrases like:

"It's easy to get confused."

"I understand why you're so upset."

"The details make this difficult."

"The is a very difficult assignment."

6. Use silence.

Pausing before you respond to a student's misbehavior gives you time to reflect. Everyone hates a void so we rush to fill in the silent spaces. A quiet, calm silence can work to your advantage.

7. Match your words to your body language.

Smiling when discussing a tough class assignment gives the wrong message. Match your facial expressions to your words.

8. Invite an angry student to sit.

We have the most resistance while we are standing. I keep a rocking chair in my classroom. It's difficult to rock back and forth and stay angry for long.

9. Handle a student's insults.

Don't confront or make threats.

Think. Use conversation. Discretion and diplomacy are powerful tools. Expressing anger may be the worst thing you can do. Resist impulsive behavior. Would a conciliatory or humorous remark take the heat from the exchange?

Buy thinking time. Take a deep breath. Before you react, double check the words, tone and intention. Then decide how to respond.

Tell the student that anger or insults won't have the desired effect. Say something like:

"Jeff, yelling and exploding won't work with me."

Use body language to end the insult. Look bored, yawn and wave the person away.

Summary

- 1. Use "I messages."**
- 2. Use small talk.**
- 3. Invite kids to talk about feelings.**
- 4. Try the Sweet and Sour Approach.**
- 5. Always provide face-saving comments.**
- 6. Use silence.**
- 7. Match your words to your body language.**
- 8. Invite an angry student to sit.**

